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Additional studies in Rio Grande Valley history

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Volume Eight
The UTB/TSC Regional History Series
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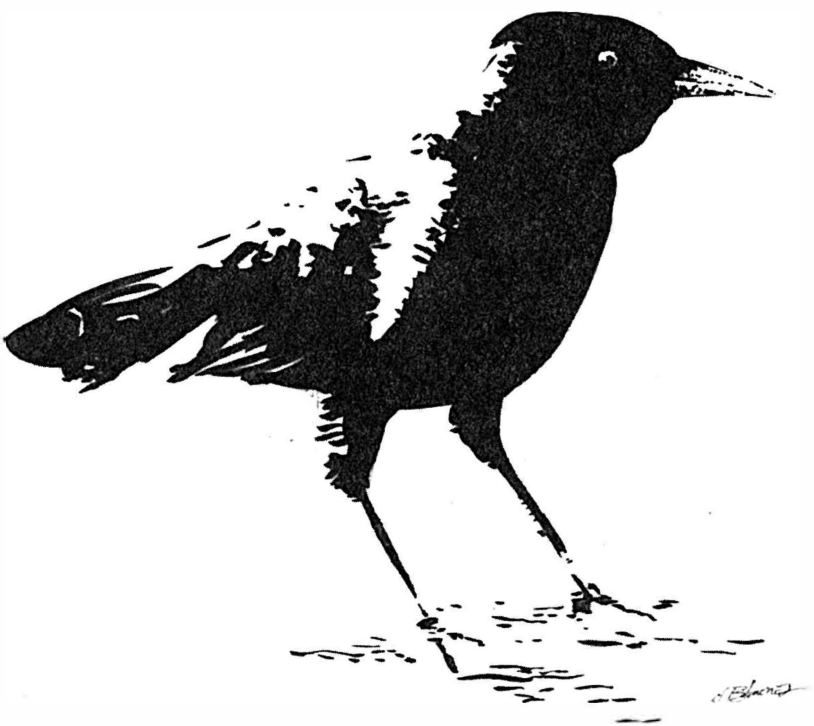

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Border Birding

Birds stream across
from the south

while men and
women still dodge

river thieves and
wade murky currents

balancing their bundles
as green cousins

binocular the banks
clip their wings

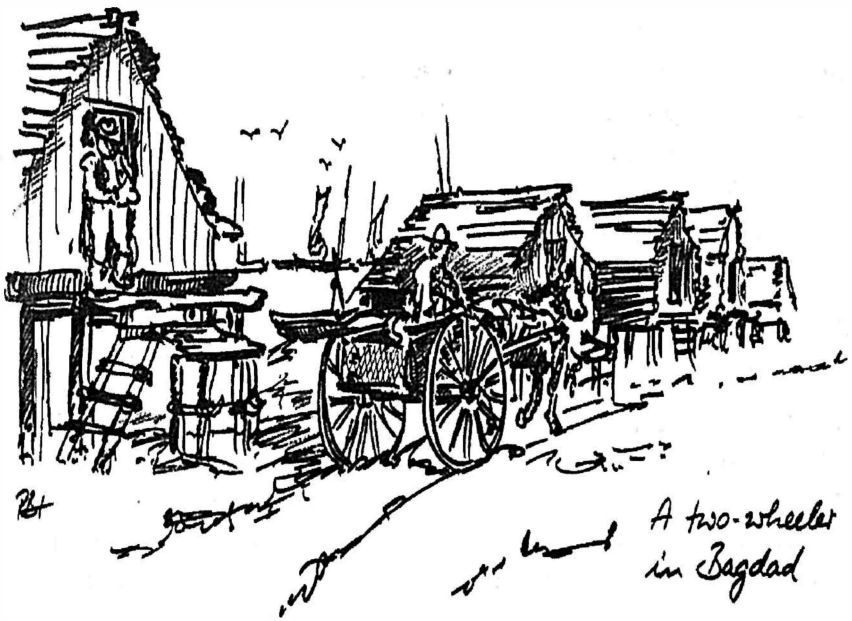
and send them
back in cages.

– Charles Dameron

EARLY HISTORY

The Curse *(La Maldición)*

Heard by Peter Gawenda in October 1984
at TSC Library and in February 1986 at the
Barbershop on Market Place in Brownsville



During bad weather, an old woman is sometimes seen at the old location of Bagdad. She is wailing and calling her granddaughter. She never approaches the people who see her and would like to console her. She is described as having torn clothing and being bare-footed and bleeding from her arms and legs. Sometimes she will be with a young girl who is covering her face and who is silently crying. Both always remain at a distance no matter how much anyone tries to approach them. In several instances, people explained that the two women just disappear towards the location where the graveyard supposedly had been. An old beachcomber who spoke about the two women said that he even found a set of weathered sandals where the old woman first appeared to him. He had picked them up and put them into the crate on the back of

his bicycle. But, when he arrived at home, the sandals were gone. A man who had encountered the old woman in the sixties when he was a student found a pair of bleached handmade sandals. He kept them in the trunk of his car. But when he returned home these sandals also were gone.

The beachcomber told us that his father knew who the women were and he gave the following explanation. It was around Christmas of 1865. The town of Bagdad was booming. Gambling, peddling and prostitution flourished. Americans visited the town from the North, and French, Austrian, and Belgian soldiers who had arrived with Maximilian, and Mexican soldiers who were supposed to guard the town came from the South. As he explained, business, pleasure, and sin had turned this Mexican town into a biblical Babylon or Babel.

An old woman had arrived from the interior of Mexico searching for her fourteen-year-old granddaughter, who, she said, had been abducted by a soldier and taken to Bagdad. Several days she went from cantina to cantina, to the hotel, the boarding house, and the two bathhouses. She walked to the pier and asked at the boats with the red lanterns. But everywhere she went she was laughed at, pushed out, or even thrown out. When she finally went to the house of *el Comandante* to beg him to help her find her *nieta*, he only laughed and had her chased out of town with his dogs. Reaching the edge of town she had fallen. The dogs tore her clothing and viciously attacked her. No one helped her or at least pulled the dogs away. Close to death, she yelled that the Lord would revenge her granddaughter and her by sending a plague that would treat the town as the town had treated her and her *nieta*. Then she died.

Not even one month later, on January 6, 1866, a group of released soldiers entered the town, overpowered the Mexican and French soldiers, then got drunk, and murdered, raped, and robbed the town's people, thus fulfilling the old woman's curse.

River Boundaries of Texas: The Louisiana-Texas Borderland and Lower Rio Grande Valley in Comparative Perspective, 1700-1850

by

Francis X. Galán

Each year thousands of visitors from Texas and Mexico make their annual pilgrimage to Louisiana and pump millions of dollars into state coffers through casino gambling and the tourism industry. Conversely, many tourists from the United States, including Spring Breakers and Snowbirds, trek to South Padre Island and Matamoros for sun worship and fun. Despite political and cultural differences, Louisiana and the Lower Rio Grande Valley each exhibit this phenomenon of movement of peoples and commerce that pre-dated European arrival to these regions. They also share the Gulf of Mexico and a boundary with Texas that travelers and merchants wished to cross on their way to the vast Mississippi and Rio Grande river systems that dominated much of the landscape and traffic in North America. Two major international wars occurred within a century of each other, the French and Indian War, 1754-1763, and the U.S.-Mexican War, 1846-1848, which were crucial precipitating events in the creation and formation of the United States, yet remain overshadowed among U.S. historians looking ahead to the American Revolution and U.S. Civil War. The present interstate and international borders of the United States, Canada, and Mexico, however, emerged upon the heels of environmental, economic, and immigrant patterns of exchange as much as, if not greater than, warfare and politics over exclusive, and often contested, claims to capital, land, and labor. The Louisiana-Texas borderland and Lower Rio Grande Valley in comparative perspective offer scholars a fresh examination into why the former became a mostly "Cold War" zone following the French and Indian War, while the latter region erupted into internecine warfare time and

time again. The relative tranquility of present-day vacationers in these disparate places exchanging dollars and pesos for adventure and pleasure in contrast to the violence often associated with the costs of human and drug smuggling belies a past that still recognizes no political or economic borders.

Theories and Terminology

The most dramatic difference between the Louisiana-Texas borderland and the Lower Rio Grande Valley during the colonial and early national eras had everything to do with the presence of predominantly sedentary (Caddo) Indians in the former and of seminomadic hunters in the latter. Closely following the human element are the environment, land distribution, and settlement patterns that determined how far into the wilderness Spanish colonization could safely spread. Agriculturally-based Hasinai Caddos held a friendly disposition toward Spaniards in East Texas after initial violent clashes between them occurred in the early 1690s following the Spanish search for La Salle's colony. Relatively peaceful relations were sustained with French traders in nearby Natchitoches, Louisiana, acting as a moderating presence through worship, kinship, and commerce with Caddo and Spanish neighbors.[1] These arrangements stood in sharp contrast to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where hunter-gatherer bands of Indians, collectively referred to as Coahuiltecans, disappeared entirely or were gathered into Spanish missions. There also remained the fear of Indian raiders from the Southern Plains wreaking havoc upon the Spanish settlements along the lower Rio Grande, especially Laredo, which had occurred so often at San Antonio de Béxar.[2]

These two regions, however, are joined by the Gulf of Mexico that had served as a sea route linking the Atlantic trade with Veracruz and New Orleans, the main ports of entry for European goods into the interior of New Spain (or colonial Mexico) and French Louisiana, respectively. The Spanish provinces of Texas and Nuevo Santander stood forsaken in between these ports without any legal port of their own, since mercantile policies under Spain

prohibited direct trade there. Spanish Texas was born primarily out of the imperial goal to defend the rich silver mines of New Spain against French encroachment from Louisiana following La Salle's landing at Matagorda Bay in 1685.[3] Nuevo Santander likewise emerged from the perceived threat to New Spain upon the arrival of French naval vessels at New Orleans during the 1740s and early 1750s. France intended these to fortify its trading posts along the Mississippi, primarily to counter English competition over the Indian fur trade and to contain British-American colonies to the east coast.[4] Meanwhile, Spanish soldier-settlers in Texas and Nuevo Santander, like their counterparts elsewhere in West Florida, New Mexico, and Alta California, remained isolated from legal Spanish ports of entry and turned to the very same European traders they were supposed to keep out, particularly since imported products from Spain were fewer and more expensive than French or English-made goods.[5] Smuggling thus became the greatest similarity for Hispanic residents of the Louisiana-Texas borderland and the Lower Rio Grande Valley beyond imperial objectives, while their relations with indigenous peoples, the environment, and land were vastly different.

While the Lower Rio Grande Valley is a relatively well-defined region, the Louisiana-Texas borderland has only recently entered the lexicon of scholarly focus, perhaps attributable to the absence of major international warfare and fame.[6] The French and Indian War never saw any pitched battles in Louisiana as the drama unfolded in the Ohio River Valley and was captured later in James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* (1826), which Hollywood famously made into a feature film in the early 1990s with actor Daniel Day Lewis as Leatherstocking, the hunter-scout, who lived on the edge of civilization and the wilderness of the New York frontier with a Mohawk Indian as his adoptive father and loyal aide. Instead, France had transferred Louisiana to Spain in 1762 to keep it out of British hands, just a year prior to the Treaty of Paris that concluded the French and Indian War and resulted in the removal of French sovereignty elsewhere in North America.

The subsequent Louisiana Purchase of 1803 has been described as the greatest real estate deal ever with Thomas Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana from Napoleon after the Spanish returned it to France just a few years earlier.[7] The Louisiana Territory stretched from the Gulf of Mexico at New Orleans northwestwardly into present Canada, but its western boundaries with northern New Spain remained ill-defined. Spain and the United States narrowly averted war against each other over of the border of Louisiana with Spanish Texas through the expedient Neutral Ground Agreement.[8]

The Battle of the Alamo, instead, overshadows all other conflicts in Texas, including the Freedonian Rebellion that occurred at Nacogdoches in deep East Texas a decade before the epic encounters of General Santa Anna versus Travis, Bowie, and Crockett, whom John Wayne popularized among American movie audiences in the early 1960s. East Texas revolts during the Spanish-Mexican period were as much multi-ethnic civil wars among Anglos, Mexicans, and Indians, with mostly enslaved African-American servants waiting in the balance, but remain overlooked in the public imagination and Hollywood. In 1822, Fort Jesup, a U.S. fort established in northwestern Louisiana after the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 determined the Sabine River as the new river boundary between Louisiana and Spanish Texas, came under the command of Lt. Zachary Taylor long before it became a major staging ground for the U.S invasion of Mexico two decades later.[9] But the influence of Louisiana upon events in Texas and northern Mexico are generally missed.

The first skirmishes of the U.S.-Mexican War occurred in the Neutral Ground between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande in the decade following the Battle of the Alamo. This worst-case scenario was completely opposite to what had been avoided on the Louisiana-Texas borderland. The principal reason behind these contrasting results in the two regions had to do with specific local and regional relationships with the Indians, not just Euro-Americans, as well as socio-economic differences. Such broader

connections represent an approach to Texas history that historians Gilberto Hinojosa and Gerald Poyo first advanced twenty years ago to make the Spanish borderlands significant to U.S. history.[10]

San Antonio and the Battle of the Alamo, like the American Revolution before it and the U.S. Civil War afterwards, still command greater attention from scholars and the American public than the U.S.-Mexican War. The latter, on the other hand, remains the defining event of Mexico's early national period for Mexican scholars and its populace at large from a young school age. Previously under Spain, San Antonio had served as the provincial capital of Texas during the late eighteenth century with the governorship relocated there from East Texas. This transfer of power occurred with the reorganization of Spanish military defenses in northern New Spain in light of the greater threat from English traders and Comanche raiders after the French and Indian War.[11] Many *Tejanos* and Anglo Texians in the subsequent Mexican period after 1821 resented the gubernatorial transfer of power from San Antonio to the state of Coahuila and adhered to the Federal Constitution of 1824 with the prospects for separate statehood.[12] The Louisiana-Texas borderland and Lower Rio Grande Valley regions, however, play second fiddle to San Antonio, site of the Alamo and the number one tourist attraction in Texas, similar to West Texans being geographically distant, as well as their regional concerns far removed, from the Dallas-Houston-Austin nexus of political power in the state.

The Louisiana-Texas borderland is defined as the region between the lower Red River at Natchitoches, Louisiana, near its junction with the Mississippi River, and westward to the lower Trinity and Brazos rivers in East Texas just east of present Houston. Spanish Texas was confined largely south of the Camino Real from San Antonio to La Bahía (present Goliad) and northeastward to Los Adaes (until 1773) and Nacogdoches (established in 1779), while the Comanche presence on the Southern Plains north of the Camino Real effectively confined Spanish settlement to San Antonio, especially after the Comanches and their *Norteño* Indian

allies destroyed Mission San Sabá in the Texas Hill Country region. Like the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the Louisiana-Texas borderland was a region that historians currently describe about the U.S., Canadian, and Mexican political borders as "trans-national" in character and inclusive of peoples, land, and commerce on both sides of our nations boundaries. This approach sharply rectifies the traditional usage of "frontier," following the lead of Frederick Jackson Turner, denoting the westward advance of Anglo-American colonization in stages across the North American continent into the wilderness. Historian David J. Weber sees the Spanish empire in North America, however, as "one side of a many-sided frontier" and "zones of interaction" between two different cultures rather than viewed simply as lines drawn on a map.[13] The term "borderlands" itself has been defined as "contested boundaries between colonial domains" and has increasingly replaced the use of frontier, while the term "borders" applies to the national periods of the United States and Mexico following the "imperial borderlands."[14]

Weber also recently has identified so-called "strategic frontiers" in Spanish America as "areas that faced the possessions of other European powers" where independent Indians held greater leverage to play off Spaniards against other European rivals. He specifically mentions the Louisiana-Texas borderlands as one of these regions and the ability of the Caddos to deal alternatively with the Spanish, French, and English, similar to what Indians did in the present southeastern United States.[15] The Lower Rio Grande Valley was no strategic frontier in Weber's definition where Indians and other Europeans were concerned, and perhaps less capable of sustaining any "middle ground" or accommodation like the Louisiana-Texas borderland before the Mexican period.[16]

Spanish-Mexican settlements along the lower Rio Grande remained isolated from everyone, and rather quickly became caught in "divided ground" between the United States and Mexico following Mexican Independence from Spain. This happened, comparatively speaking, to Iroquois nations on the New York-Canadian

borderlands during, and beyond, the American Revolution, where they found themselves increasingly partitioned between the United States and the British Empire, which had retained control over Canada. The Iroquois ability to play off contesting Anglo-American powers and to remain in the middle ground (as they did during the French and Indian War) had virtually vanished by the end of the War of 1812.[17] Another word for middle ground or accommodation is the notion of *convivencia* (from the Spanish word *convivir*, literally meaning "to live together or cohabit," which scholars have applied to debates about the relations among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Spain dating back to the medieval period). For example, Benjamin Gampel argues that *convivencia* existed under the Muslim occupation of Spain, even though faith-based communities "mistrusted each other and were often jealous of each other's successes, and the ever-present competition among them occasionally turned to hatred."[18] In other words, there were no trilateral relations in the Lower Rio Grande Valley during the colonial period whereby one side could play off the other, regardless of how one defines the middle ground.

This absence of a third party is also significant for the meaning of a community that varies across time and place. Historian Jesús F. (Frank) de la Teja portrays San Antonio as an isolated, fortress community on the edge of several ecological zones that came together as one town primarily due to the threat from Southern Plains raiders. It began as a presidio-mission complex to which was added the Canary Islander families who instituted the town council form of government. Because of "isolation, neglect, and danger," de la Teja says, "the people of San Antonio de Béxar created not only a permanent settlement but a sense of community that survived the test of the wilderness." And that sense of place, he adds, exerts a "powerful force on an individual's and a group's sense of identity."[19] This feeling of community was surely tested through the revolutionary eras of the early nineteenth century until San Antonio's identity broke apart at the seams with the Battle of the Alamo and the presence of Anglo Texians.

Community held a much different meaning, however, for the Louisiana-Texas borderland and the Lower Rio Grande Valley settlements, which essentially longed for foreign traders, an area where smuggling played a bigger role than in San Antonio. In her work on Hispanic people in the American Southwest following the U.S.-Mexican War, historian Sarah Deutsch argues that the villages in the Hispanic center of the Upper Rio Grande Valley and the mining towns of southern Colorado "created a regional community bound by ties of kinship as well as economy." Migration and the search for work in these recently annexed American territories continually fed strategies for collective survival in land use and schooling, but implied mostly a "pattern of private choices, an aggregate choice" and not some conspiracy or revolt. Hispanics still identified themselves by their local villages, but the presence of many such villages made up a regional community. For Deutsch, women's work and a flexible division of labor played an especially crucial role that allowed seasonal migration of men to trade and herd livestock, while land inheritance for all children and community property rights gave women greater independence.[20] The Louisiana-Texas borderland and the Lower Rio Grande Valley similarly encompassed regional ties that brought multiple local communities together, despite friction, while the role of women and the significance of gender issues needs greater attention from scholars alongside race and class.

Lastly, borders may be political dividers on maps, but these can never permanently separate local peoples, economies, and cultures. The eminent historian Peter Sahlins argues that even the great Pyrenees Mountains serve as much to unite as divide southern France from northern Spain. He argues that local society in the Cerdanya region became the "motive force in the formation and consolidation of nationhood and the territorial state" and was a "two-way process." Bourbon France and Spain could not simply impose boundaries and values upon peoples who interacted with one another and shared identification with a "local sense of place" long before the rise of modernity and nation states.[21] Rather, the

nation is imagined and often contested culturally at the borders through patriotic symbols, language, and other forms of display, as historian Benedict Anderson shows elsewhere.[22] In his own recent work, historian Andrés Reséndez builds upon Sahlins and Anderson to show similar processes at work for Anglo, Hispanic, and Native-American communities in Texas and New Mexico at critical periods of the nineteenth century before their incorporation into the United States.[23] Many of these places developed into "regions of refuge" for people from many socio-economic backgrounds that tempered the assimilation process into one nation or another and has remained periodically contested down to the present.[24] These works and many others over the past two decades present new vistas to a global comparative perspective driven from Europe and Washington.[25] Borderlands historiography ultimately shares a transnational aspect for understanding local identities and loyalty to nation that reveals that, no matter how much borders are enforced, lines are not fixed and are meant to be broken.[26]

Contrasts

Far from living in isolated hamlets, the local Indians of the Lower Rio Grande Valley had known migration, commerce and regional ties along the vast Gulf of Mexico long before European arrival. The fascinating archaeological site known as the Brownsville Complex, located on the south side of the Rio Grande, reveals that indigenous peoples from the Huasteca Region in present southern Mexico served as the "main conduit" for contact between the Indians of the Rio Grande Delta and Meso-america.[27] Beginning around 800-1200 AD, during the Late Prehistoric period, the Indians of these two regions established commercial ties as evidenced through the archaeological record for the Brownsville Complex with artifacts of jadeite, serpentine, obsidian, and especially ceramics from the Huastecas. Rio Grande Delta natives had long specialized in hunting and gathering, and perhaps bartered foods and animal skins found in great abundance in South Texas and northeastern Mexico for specialty goods or luxury items. Further archaeological work on the prehistoric peoples of the

Lower Rio Grande Valley remains, particularly kinship patterns, but there was definitely some economic and cultural interaction between its local Indians to the south over vast distances.[28]

The Caddo Indians of the Louisiana-Texas borderland also held regional ties with indigenous peoples from far away places. Historian David La Vere describes a vast inter-regional system of commerce, beginning at least around 700 AD, based upon gifting, reciprocity, and kinship relations. The fortuitous location of the Caddos on the margins of woodlands, prairies, and plains at the western edge of the great mound-building cultural tradition of the Mississippi River Valley made Caddo priest-chiefs very powerful figures. The Louisiana-Texas borderland served as the principal gateway for indigenous peoples from the Southern Plains and Southwest to those from the Southeast. Geography found Caddos a people "in between" highly contrasting cultures even before Spanish and French colonization initially clashed over exclusive commerce with, and loyalty of, the Caddos during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.[29] No consensus exists among archaeologists, anthropologists, and ethno-historians over whether there were any connections between the Woodland Indians of east Texas and Louisiana with Mesoamerica. Nonetheless, several regional trade networks co-existed among Indians from the Lower *and* Upper Rio Grande Valleys of Texas and New Mexico, respectively, to the Lower Mississippi River Valley, precisely where Europeans found fertile places for colonization.

The Caddos were mainly sedentary communities based primarily upon agriculturally-mixed economies of farming, hunting, fishing, and gathering, though trade connections might have been similar to what the Indians of the Lower Rio Grande Delta enjoyed with natives from the Huasteca. The Caddos, however, lived in permanent towns and villages, as opposed to the semi-nomadic way of life the Lower Rio Grande hunters had known upon European arrival. The last of the Caddo-constructed mounds was built during the fourteenth century, but then this practice ceased, due principally to prolonged droughts. La Vere says the Caddos from east-

ern Oklahoma experienced famine and that those who survived began a migration toward the Caddo chiefdoms of east Texas and northwestern Louisiana along the Red, Sabine, Angelina, and Neches rivers.[30]

The decline of Indian societies of the Lower Rio Grande Valley was likely more attributable to diseases and slave raids than environmental changes once the Europeans ventured into native lands. Disease and captivity plagued the Indians from the nearby Sierra Madre Oriental mountain range following the establishment of the Spanish provinces of Coahuila and Nuevo Leon during the late fifteenth century, with the introduction of the *encomienda* system of Indian tribute and land in exchange for an encomendero's pledge to provide for the natives.[31] Indian captives, including women and children, were still forcibly brought to work on haciendas, even after the extinction of the encomienda system in 1672 and the beginning of the *congrega* and frontier missions.[32] Many of them might have found the Lower Rio Grande Valley to be a temporary region of refuge until Spanish colonization under José de Escandón began there in earnest during the mid-eighteenth century. More studies of the mission system of incorporation along the lower Rio Grande are needed.

The Caddos, on the other hand, avoided forced removal into Spanish missions, and resisted Christian evangelization for the greater part of the eighteenth century. Diseases still wrecked havoc upon Caddoan communities, as, increasingly, did displaced Indian migrants, warfare, and Anglo- American immigration from other regions of North America.[33] As long as the Caddos and French inhabitants remained, the Louisiana-Texas borderland served as a region of refuge and prolonged Indian independence. The same cannot be said for the Lower Rio Grande Valley during the eighteenth century, where Indians alternately sought Spanish mission life and revolted against Hispanic settlements without the benefit of other European patrons.

Land distribution and settlement patterns among Indian and Spanish communities also varied greatly between the Louisiana-Texas borderland and the Lower Rio Grande Valley, due to their respective environments, demographics, and geo-political relationships. The Indians of the Lower Rio Grande Delta interacted with only one major environmental setting on a plain adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico. They lived primarily on the coastal plain between the Rio San Fernando of present northern Tamaulipas and the Nueces River of South Texas, a range of approximately 200 miles with the Delta region nearly midway. The major streams flowed eastward from the Sierra Madre Oriental and drained either into the Gulf of Mexico or the Rio Grande. European observers sighted the Indians living mostly along the flowing streams, while few actually inhabited the poorly-watered areas north of the Rio Grande to the Nueces River.[34]

Although the Louisiana-Texas borderland also stretched over roughly the same distance as the Lower Rio Grande Delta, the Caddos were further inland from the Gulf of Mexico, spreading across the region. This was because water was more evenly distributed throughout the woodlands and prairies, with at least six major rivers that flowed southeastward into the Gulf of Mexico, though the Red River joined the mighty Mississippi in northwestern Louisiana near present Natchitoches (which was named after one of the major Caddo Confederacies befriended by French traders). The other two major Caddo Confederacies that formed (as the Natchitoches did on the eve of European colonization during the late seventeenth century) were the Kadohhadacho (who settled near the present state borders of Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas) and the Hasinai of East Texas. All three confederacies were composed of various smaller communities, linguistically and culturally Caddo. There were also small independent Indian nations in the Adaes and Ais situated on opposite sides of the Sabine River and likely more politically than culturally associated with the Caddos. Although warfare was not central to their culture, the Caddos united against their traditional enemies from the Osage to

the north, the Choctaw and Chickasaw to the east, and the Apaches to the west on the edge of the Louisiana-Texas borderland.[35]

The Caddos were also numerically greater than the French and Spanish communities who settled among them in the countryside, while the Indians of the Lower Rio Grande Delta faced more heavily populated Spanish towns concentrated along the river like their counterparts in the Upper Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico. The total Caddo population numbered approximately 10,000 inhabitants in 1700, which was drastically less than the estimated 200,000 in 1492. Diseases contributed to their rapid decline that continued well into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Hasinais or Tejas were the largest of the three Caddo confederacies by the early 1700s (with some 5,000 Indians), followed by the Kadohadacho (with 3,500 people) and the Natchitoches (who comprised 2,000). In 1721, the Adaes and Ais together (numbering less than 700 persons) became the target of Spanish missionaries upon the establishment of presidios and missions named after these local Indians and various saints, as also did such of the Hasinai nations farther west as the Nacogdoches Indians.[36] Meanwhile, the Spanish fort at Los Adaes numbered around 500 residents at its peak in the late 1760s, before its abandonment under the New Regulations of 1772 that instituted military reforms in northern New Spain. The French post at Natchitoches, located just fifteen miles east of Los Adaes, had around 800 residents by 1770 before an influx of Anglo-American immigrants and African slaves nearly doubled its population during the 1780s. Elsewhere in Spanish Texas, only San Antonio counted more settlers than Natchitoches at this time, while Nacogdoches had around 450 residents upon its establishment in 1779.[37]

The smaller Spanish and French communities on the Louisiana-Texas borderland recognized the importance of harmony, since larger Caddo populations armed with guns had them surrounded. In the late 1770s, Commandant Athanese de Mézières of the Natchitoches post, then under Spanish sovereignty, reported that peaceful relations existed between the Caddos and Spaniards. He

even claimed that Hasinai, Nacogdoches, and other Caddo Indians "loved the Spaniards, and were quick to serve them with the efficacy which remains of the memory of [French] Louisiana when in the year 1730 the enemy Natchez invaded the territory, and perished by their weapons."[38] The fact that eighteen Spanish troops from Presidio Los Adaes fought with the French and Caddos in defense of the Natchitoches post against the Natchez Indians was not lost on local inhabitants. One Spanish soldier actually sacrificed his life defending the French post. This memory of alliance perhaps eased the hatred the Caddos initially felt toward the Spaniards following their first *entrada* into East Texas in 1690. These harmonious tri-lateral relations contrasted sharply with the violence that continued to plague Spanish-Indian relations at San Antonio de Béxar and La Bahía after those communities were established in 1718 and 1722, respectively.

To compare the Hispanic settlement on the Louisiana-Texas borderland and in Spanish Texas generally, Escandón's colonization of the Lower Rio Grande Valley that began in 1746 involved some 800 soldiers and several thousand Spanish families escorted to thirteen different localities where five towns were initially established. The number of Indians in this region was roughly 15,000 around this time, but many Indians were associated with the Spanish missions.[39] There were also officers from leading Spanish families in the towns who had many Indian servants, such as Captain don Blas María de la Garza Falcón and his wife, doña María Josepha de los Santos Coy, from Camargo, who had two children and 103 servants of both sexes in 1757. The vast majority of the Spanish settlers, however, did not have any servants.[40] Unincorporated Indian warriors were proficient in the use of the bow and arrow, but evidently not armed with guns. Their ability to coalesce into larger alliances was stymied by the mission Indians alternately at peace or in rebellion against the Spanish settlements.[41] Independence for Indians in the Lower Rio Grande Valley was more problematic without greater forces, weapons, or another European presence nearby to play off the Spaniards.

The Caddos held these tactical advantages, besides being commercial partners in trade and having successfully resisted conversion to Catholicism. In fact, the viceroy in Mexico City in 1733 denied the request of Father Paredes, President of the East Texas Missions, to use Spanish soldiers from Los Adaes to forcibly remove Caddos from the *monte* (wilderness) into a "pueblo" where the missions were located. It not only could upset the French, who had ties with many Caddo nations, but the viceroy considered it an undue burden against the Royal Treasury.[42] There was no one to take the side of semi-nomadic hunters on the Rio Grande Delta besides the missionaries, a situation which kept the Lower Rio Grande Valley from becoming a "strategic frontier" during the eighteenth century, as had happened to the Louisiana-Texas borderland.

These two regions consequently developed contrasting land distribution and settlement patterns. The countryside of the Louisiana-Texas borderland became a relatively safe place for those married Spanish soldiers with families from Los Adaes to spread out into the wilderness and to settle on small ranches with livestock and subsistence agriculture as their primary sources for livelihood besides, often unpaid, wages. There were fewer royal land grants in East Texas than in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, though in both places the governors of Spanish Texas and Nuevo Santander initially monopolized land. The Spanish governors at Los Adaes, or their lieutenant officers acting as commandant in the governor's absence, selectively handed private grants of land to those who displayed loyalty, while those whom fell out of favor lost their *plazas* (garrison post) and had their property confiscated.[43]

The Spanish towns of the Lower Rio Grande Valley huddled along the river, which provided its main source of water. Following the removal of Escandón as governor of Nuevo Santander, royal officials in 1767 granted a petition by town residents for land distribution into *porciones*, which were rectangular shapes that fronted the Rio Grande.[44] A decade later, ten royal grants were issued in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, with the last one made in 1808.[45]

While Matamoros generally experienced greater security from Southern Plains raiders (thanks to its location at the southernmost tip of the river delta), Laredo suffered from greater Indian attacks at the northernmost edge of the Lower Rio Grande.[46] It was also too dangerous, besides water concerns, to extend into lands south of the Nueces River closer to San Antonio and La Bahía, lands under incessant warfare with Indians. Still, Indian troubles did not prevent Spanish settlements along the Lower Rio Grande Valley from competing over choice lands for cattle ranching.

Similarities

The greatest similarity between the Louisiana-Texas borderland and the Lower Rio Grande Valley had to do with contraband trade. The ever present trouble of smuggling along the U.S.-Mexican border has its origins in the colonial period with the appearance, first, of French traders from Louisiana on the Rio Grande, followed by English, Anglo-American, and Russian traders throughout the American Southwest. Spanish officials were so concerned about the combination of smuggling and Indian rebellion that they attempted to stamp it out during the *Borbón* Reforms, especially after the rise of King Carlos III (1759-1788) to the throne. No matter how great the effort of Spanish *Borbón* officials to reform its economy and military defenses, as well as to end corruption, they could not prevent local peoples from engaging in contraband trade, not only in the Louisiana-Texas borderland and Lower Rio Grande Valley, but throughout Spanish America. They had learned that "trade, treaties, and toleration" with independent, pagan Indians on the frontier were preferable to warfare with seemingly no end in sight.[47] But Spanish officials perhaps realized too late (without ever fully understanding them) the desires of their own frontier settlers for commerce unburdened by mercantilism.

According to historians Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, border towns have long been isolated from, and overlooked, by mainstream society in the United States and Mexico, yet they "have played a significant role in the destinies of their two nations." Rather

than simply victims of national policies, Kearney and Knopp add, border towns have been major players in the creation of the U.S.-Mexican border and "helped to catalyze the Mexican-American War." In the twentieth century, border troubles influenced U.S. entry into World War I, *bracero* and *maquiladora* programs, and, lately, NAFTA. The same may be said about the influence the Louisiana-Texas borderland had upon the Louisiana Purchase and the extension of U.S interests to the Upper Rio Grande at Santa Fe and the Lower Rio Grande at Matamoros-Brownsville. Whether one speaks of the colonial and early national periods or more recent times, the intent of state officials has been to avoid international conflict while preserving national treasures.

Following the War of the Spanish Succession (1700-1713), a Canadian-born adventurer named Louis Juchereau de Saint-Denis set events into motion that historian Donald Chipman says "would change the course of Texas history."[48] Among the most notable were his commercial ties from French Natchitoches with the Hasinai (*Tejas*) Caddo in East Texas; his kinship in 1715 with a Spanish captain at Presidio San Juan Bautista on the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass, Texas; and his illicit trade in Coahuila near the Rio Grande with willing Spanish settlers which first drew anxious Mexico City officials to investigate smuggling. These affairs foreshadowed events on the Louisiana-Texas borderland over the next half-century following the establishment of Spanish Los Adaes in 1721. Succeeding where La Salle had failed, Saint-Denis fortified trade alliances through marital and fictive ties with Indians *and* Spaniards to establish what Patricia Lemée has called "frontier trade cartels."[49] Based upon commercial, religious, and kinship networks, Saint-Denis and his wife, Manuela Sánchez y Navarro, became "godparents" to French, Spanish, Caddo and African peoples that drew together various communities on the Louisiana-Texas borderland. Saint-Denis' remarkable feat was captured in the words of novelist Ruth Cross in the early twentieth century when she wrote that "our cavalier's almost single-handed invasion of New Spain, with its attendant vicissitudes, comic, tragic,

resplendent, is dignified into a noteworthy historical movement – determining factor in our national growth."[50]

What is least fully appreciated, however, is that Saint-Denis did not work alone, while the origins, pervasiveness, and continuity of contraband trade escapes much scholarly attention, especially the role of Franciscan friars at the East Texas missions. Franciscan missionaries facilitated commercial linkages between Presidio Los Adaes and French Natchitoches during the 1720s through evangelization beyond the missions, especially in the absence of Indian neophytes. Franciscans set a precedent earlier when Father Antonio Margil from Mission Los Adaes celebrated the first mass at French Natchitoches in October 1716. The imperial conflict in 1719 between Spain and France abruptly halted these services with the abandonment of the East Texas missions.[51] In 1721, shortly after Presidio Los Adaes was founded, a Spanish priest from the re-established mission nearby offered mass on Sundays at the French Natchitoches post. In 1724, Governor Almazán, recognizing an opportunity to ensure that lines of communication with the Natchitoches post remained open, informed the viceroy that "missionaries took the initiative of administering the Holy Sacraments, and saying mass on some feast days of whose comfort has been greatly appreciated by the French who lack a religious minister."[52] The governor likely sought to justify Franco-Spanish commerce through such worship, a pattern of collaboration in smuggling with the Franciscan missionaries and French merchants at Natchitoches that continued until Presidio Los Adaes and the East Texas missions were abandoned in 1773.[53]

The Spanish governors at Los Adaes also utilized their own troops for clandestine trade to monopolize local and regional commerce with the French, Caddos, and even Spanish settlers elsewhere in northern New Spain. Spanish royal investigations reveal that the governors at Presidio Los Adaes indeed utilized Spanish officers and troops for contraband trade with the French. In 1749, Governor don Pedro del Barrio Junco y Espriella from Los Adaes had "secretly spread out his troops for such trade with the French

colony, placing goods in his store with the assistance from lieutenants Gonzales, Losoya, and Marcos Ruiz."[54] Wine and liquor were among the illicit items Spanish settlers obtained. French merchants capitalized upon Spain's prohibition against the production of wine in Spanish colonial America, which increased Los Adaes' dependence upon French Natchitoches for this item and also for guns, clothes, and other manufactured goods.[55] Mexico City officials were particularly appalled that Spanish officers from Los Adaes "bartered horses and saddles in exchange for 150 pounds of Brandy and 18 barrels of wine with the French from Natchitoches."[56] Spanish soldier-settlers traveled as far as Saltillo and New Orleans to trade hides for manufactured goods apparently with the governor's permission.[57]

Spaniards on the Louisiana-Texas borderland, in turn, used French merchandise for barter exchange with Caddos. They obtained much-needed Hasinai maize, hides, and horses, which they used to pay off creditors at French Natchitoches. Grain shipments that the Spanish viceroy in Mexico City permitted between Los Adaes and Natchitoches as early as 1733 were used as cover for contraband trade.[58] These commercial connections were aided by festivals and sacramental celebrations that brought the French, Spanish, and Caddos together, which fits into historians Michel Baud and Willem Van Schendel's analysis of states on both sides of the border connected through elites at the local level. They argue that "crossborder (and often inter-ethnic) networks of friendship, courtship, and kinship are as much part of the border culture as cross-border economic and political partnerships."[59] Historian Dan Usner, describing commerce in the Lower Mississippi Valley, explains that this network entailed "substantial intraregional connections" that included a "diverse and dynamic participation of Indians, settlers, and slaves" in relationships marked by fluidity and plenty of common ground for survival in the wilderness. The plantation economy based upon African slavery, he argues, increasingly replaced this frontier exchange of livestock, captives, hides, and other goods, especially after the second Treaty of Paris

in 1783 that concluded the American Revolution.[60] Usner's analysis extends to the Louisiana-Texas borderland, where the appearance of English traders and incessant Comanche raids deeper into East Texas brought greater efforts by Spanish *Borbón* officials to stamp out contraband trade, commit more troops to the region, reassure Caddo allies, and encourage plantation agriculture. Spanish settlers who made the difficult transition from Los Adaes to San Antonio and then back to East Texas, with the establishment of Nacogdoches at the former mission of the same name, had Caddo allies to help militia protect them, but did not mind foreign traders, even if they were no longer French.

When Anglo-American traders eventually made their way into Spanish Louisiana and Texas, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they also utilized pre-existing commercial and social relations. They either entered into local elite society at Natchitoches or settled in the countryside near the current Texas-Louisiana border, where they established ties with Spanish and Indian inhabitants for survival. Once again, the arrival of foreign traders made Spanish officials very anxious about securing the Texas border with Louisiana, as well as the loyalty of its own subjects. The most infamous incident was the pursuit of filibusterer Philip Nolan by the Spanish militia from Nacogdoches and his death in 1801. Smugglers like Nolan, an Irish immigrant from Belfast, showed an interest in rounding up wild mustangs in the countryside with the help of Indians, as well as a penchant for stirring trouble in East Texas.[61] Perhaps the most widely recognized smuggler, however, was Jean Lafitte, who arrived to the Louisiana-Texas borderland between 1816-1820 during the lull in the independence struggle against Spain and brought slaves to Galveston Island. Lafitte sold them to Jim Bowie and other traders from Louisiana, who smuggled them back into the U.S. South and resold them for great profits.[62] Although Spanish *Borbón* officials, during the eighteenth century, recognized the need for "borderland-style accommodation," even with the Comanches, they

had the greatest difficulty with Anglo-American immigrants and suspected filibusterers, smugglers, revolutionaries among them.[63]

Smuggling also became very significant in the Lower Rio Grande Valley by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, since Spanish mercantilist policies restricted free trade with foreigners virtually everywhere. Hispanic settlements on the Lower Rio Grande Valley, although not as removed as Los Adaes and Nacogdoches from legitimate sources of overland trade, also remained relatively isolated. Spanish settlers from Matamoros increasingly looked to New Orleans as a new source of trade, especially following the transfer of Louisiana from France to Spain, just as ranchers from San Antonio helped East Texas ranchers pioneer cattle drives into Louisiana. The De la Garza clan particularly became involved in smuggling with Louisiana pirates, whose favorite landings were at Port Isabel, located north of the Rio Grande River near present South Padre and Brownsville, as well as Boca del Rio, situated south of the Rio Grande River and later renamed Bagdad. Historians Kearney and Knopp suggest that smuggling might have sprouted these newer communities.[64]

The creation of new communities occurred as well on the Louisiana-Texas borderland. For example, Bayou Pierre coalesced around the mid-eighteenth century northwest of Natchitoches, Louisiana, near a Caddo Indian village that engaged in double-dealing with the French and Spanish. The Bayou Pierre community was composed of Spanish, French, Caddo, and mixed-blood settlers, and remained always just beyond the long arm of the law.[65] Spanish and French ranches of East Texas and northwestern Louisiana, numerous Caddo Indian trails, rivers, and the European posts at Los Adaes and Natchitoches were all nodes of contraband trade that attracted lots of attention from Indian raiders and Anglo-Americans alike. However, more research into contraband trade in the Spanish archives is necessary for the Lower Rio Grande Valley, especially concerning possible Indian sources of smuggling, for deeper comparisons of smuggling with other regions.

Despite the Louisiana Purchase by the United States in 1803, both regions continued to trade with Louisiana, although much of the trade was clandestine. In fact, just a few years before, Philip Nolan had made contact with the Spanish settlers from Guerrero/Revilla on the Lower Rio Grande and was looking forward to even greater trade with the United States when his death temporarily halted such dreams. Furthermore, Jean Lafitte liked the shallow beaches of Port Isabel that helped to protect his vessels from bigger Spanish war ships in pursuit of pirates at sea. In 1817, American and British interests helped to finance the landing of a revolutionary force under Padre Servando de Mier and Francisco Mina off the coast just south of Matamoros.[66] Interestingly, the independence period against Spain proved profitable for Matamoros through such illicit trade, which helped keep it loyal to the Spanish crown, while the other settlements further up the Rio Grande – Reynosa, Camargo, and Revilla – fared less well from smuggling, and declared in favor of the Gutierrez-Magee revolt of 1812. Meanwhile, Laredo stayed loyal, perhaps out of dependence upon the Spanish military for repelling Indian raids. Smuggling continued, however, into the Mexican period, as vestiges from the colonial period remained. The Mexican government, like its predecessor, had prohibited many goods from entering its territory, and also kept customs duties high. American traders resented these measures, though Mexican customs officials were open to bribes. Matamoros, however, maintained trade connections with New Orleans down to the U.S.-Mexican War.[67]

Conclusion

The continued encroachment of Anglo-American traders and the receptiveness of local settlers to foreign trade in both regions during the Mexican period brought opposing forces into open warfare about midway at San Antonio. The Battle of the Alamo portended greater conflict to come over the establishment of the border with Mexico and free trade, and again later in the first two battles of the U.S.-Mexican War at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma.[68] The irony is that smuggling served as "a form of accommoda-

tion" among diverse peoples on the Louisiana-Texas borderland and perhaps the Lower Rio Grande Valley during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[69] However, the hardening of political and economic borders in Mexico City and Washington left no room for any middle ground in either region without any intervening parties. The role of Hispanic and Indian peoples at the local and regional level in seeking a peaceful flow of commerce to their neglected regions needs further research.[70]

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Endnotes

1 Francis X. Galán, "Spanish Los Adaes: Worship, Kinship, and Commerce with French Natchitoches on the Spanish-Franco-Caddo Borderlands, 1721-1773" *Louisiana History* (forthcoming, 2007); see also, Elizabeth Ann Harper John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, pp. xiii and 343, who argues that peaceful co-existence emerged between Spaniards and Indians in Texas and New Mexico during the eighteenth century, while French Natchitoches and Spanish Los Adaes on the Louisiana-Texas borderland especially developed close friendship ties; see also, William L. Eakin, "The Kingdom of the Tejas: The Hasinai Indians at the Crossroads of Change," (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1997), pp. 13, 20 and 24, who states that a complicated triangular alliance among the Spaniards, French, and Hasinai Caddo formed a borderland dynamic of its own.

2 Oakah L. Jones, Jr., *Los Paisanos: Spanish Settlers on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 65; Jesús F. de la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar: A Community on New Spain's Northern Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), pp. 8-10, 18-19 and 24.

3 Donald E. Chipman, *Spanish Texas, 1519-1821* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), pp. 70 and 76.

4 Jones, *Los Paisanos*, p. 65; Clyde A. Milner, II, "Indulgent Friends and Important Allies: Political Process on the Cis-Mississippi Frontier and Its Aftermath," in Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 136-138.

5 For discussion of these provinces, see David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

6 H. Sophie Burton, "To Establish a Stock Farm for the Raising of Mules, Horses, Horned Cattle, Sheep, and Hogs": The Role of Spanish Bourbon Louisiana in the Establishment of Vacheries along the Louisiana-Texas Borderland, 1766-1803," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 109 (July 2005), pp. 99-132; Francis X. Galán, "The

Chirino Boys: Spanish Soldier-Pioneers from Los Adaes on the Louisiana-Texas Borderlands, 1735-1792," *East Texas Historical Journal* (forthcoming). On defining the Lower Rio Grande Valley, see Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, *Border Cuates: A History of the U.S.-Mexican Cities* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1995), pp. 2-3 and 15-17.

7 On the diplomacy surrounding the French transfer of Louisiana to Spain, see Arthur S. Aiton, "The Diplomacy of the Louisiana Cession," in Gilbert C. Din, ed., *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History, vol. II: The Spanish Presence in Louisiana, 1763-1803* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1996), pp. 11-27. On the diplomacy involving the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, see Jared W. Bradley, "W.C.C. Claiborne and Spain: Foreign Affairs under Jefferson and Madison, 1801-1811," in Dolores Egger Labbe, ed., *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana, vol. III: The Louisiana Purchase and its Aftermath, 1800-1850* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1998), pp. 110-125.

8 Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, pp. 294-295; see also, Charles W. Hackett, ed., *Pichardo's Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas*, 4 vols. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1946).

9 For background on the Adams-Onís Treaty, see Ed Bradley, "Fighting for Texas: Filibuster James Long, the Adams-Onís Treaty, and the Monroe Administration," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 102 (January 1999), pp. 323-342; see also, Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, pp. 299-301.

10 Gerald E. Poyo and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, "Spanish Texas and Borderlands Historiography in Transition: Implications for United States History," *Journal of American History* 75 (September 1988), pp. 393-416.

11 De la Teja, *San Antonio de Bexar*, p. 139.

12 See, for example, Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992).

13 Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, p. 11.

14 Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999), p. 815.

15 David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 85, who also cites the example of South American Indians playing off the Portuguese and Spaniards. For more discussion of the ability of Indians to play off Euro-Americans elsewhere in North America, see Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); and Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

16 For discussion of the middle ground, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. x.

17 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, pp. 405-406.

18 Benjamin R. Gampel, Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Iberia: *Convivencia* through the Eyes of Sephardic Jews," in Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick, and Jerrilynn D. Dodds, eds., *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1992), p. 11.

19 De la Teja, *San Antonio de Bexar*, pp. xiii-xiv. For further discusión of SanAntonio's early history, see the wonderful work of Gerald E. Poyo and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, eds., *Tejano Origins in Eighteenth-Century San Antonio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).

20 Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 9 (First Quotation), 10 (Second Quotation), 12, and 15.

21 Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* ((Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 8 (First and Second Quotations) and 9 (Third Quotation).

22 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 4-7.

23 Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 3-5.

24 For an explanation of region of refuge, see Thomas D. Hall, *Social Change in the Southwest, 1350-1880* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), pp. 17, 19, 24, and 101-102, which expands upon this concept invented by Mexico's eminent anthropologist, Aguirre Beltran.

25 For example, see the classic trilogy of Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974; 1980; 1989). For an anthropological response to such core-driven analysis, see Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1982).

26 Rachel St. John, "Line in the Sand: The Desert Border between the United States and Mexico, 1848-1934" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2005), p. 41.

27 Rolando L. Garza, "The Prehistoric Peoples of the Rio Grande Delta and Their Connections with the Cultures of Mesoamerica," in Milo Kearney, Anthony Knopp, and Antonio Zavaleta, eds., *Studies in Rio Grande Valley History*, vol. 6 (Brownsville: The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, 2005), p. 99. Mexican historian María Luisa Herrera Casasús defines the Huasteca region as the vast region that encompassed parts of the present Mexican states of Veracruz, Tamaulipas, San Luís Potosí, Querétaro, Hidalgo, and Puebla; see Herrera Casasús, *Presencia y esclavitud del negro en la Huasteca* (México: Miguel Angel Porrúa, 1989), p. 7.

28 Ibid., pp. 98 and 103.

29 David La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms: Caddo Economics and Politics, 700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), pp. 2-3 (Quotation). On the Mississippi River-based cultures and long-distance commerce, see Lynda Norene Shaffer, *Native*

Americans Before 1492: The Moundbuilding Centers of the Eastern Woodlands (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), pp. 8-10, who argues that networks of interaction faced internally along the Mississipi and places like Cahokia became the "core" of Indian civilization while the eastern coast was the backcountry.

30 La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms*, pp. 2-4.

31 Martín Salinas, *Indians of the Rio Grande Delta: Their Role in the History of Southern Texas and Northeastern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp. 15-16.

32 Israel Cavazos Garza, *Breve historia de Nuevo León* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994), pp. 53-54 and 56. The Spanish word "congrega" appears often in the Spanish archival documents for Texas during the eighteenth century, interspersed with the words "*reducidos a mission.*"

33 On the resistance of Caddos to the Spanish missions and religious conversion, see Francis X. Galán, "Last Soldiers, First Settlers: The Los Adaes Border Community on the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1721-1779" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 2006), Chapter 2, pp. 62-89. On the decline of the Caddo nation, see F. Todd Smith, *The Caddo Indians: Tribes at the Convergence of Empires, 1542-1854* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995); see also, Timothy K. Perttula, *"The Caddo Nation": Archaeological and Ethnohistoric Perspectives* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

34 Salinas, *Indians of the Rio Grande Delta*, pp. 7, 9, and 11.

35 Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 9, 12-15; John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 165-166.

36 Smith, *The Caddo Indians*, 7-10; Tina L. Meacham, "The Population of Spanish and Mexican Texas, 1716-1836," (Ph.D. diss, University of Texas at Austin, 2000), p. 353, Table A1.1a – Reported Population for Texas Indian Tribes – East Texas.

37 Meacham, "The Population of Spanish and Mexican Texas," p. 147.

38 Report, Athanese de Mézières, February 17, 1778, Royal Presidio de San Antonio de Bexar, *AGI – Audiencia de Guadalajara*, in Catholic Archives of Texas, Archdiocese of Austin, Legajo 103-4-18, 4, Transcription, *"estan ... amantes, y amados de los Españoles, y prontos a servirles con la eficacia de que queda memoria en la Luisiana quando el año de 1730 invadieron los enemigos Natchez el territorio, y perecieron por sus armas."* Author's translation.

39 Salinas, *Indians of the Rio Grande Delta*, pp. 18-19 and 137-138.

40 Escuadra de oficiales y soldados con sueldo, Revista efectuada por el Capitan Tienda de Cuervo (del 12 al 14 de julio de 1757, Villa de Camargo, in Ismael Villarreal Peña, *Seis Villas del Norte: Antecedentes históricos de Nuevo Laredo, Dolores, Guerrero, Mier, Camargo y Reynosa* (Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas: Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas/Instituto de Investigaciones Historicas, 1986), p. 45.

41 Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, *Border Cuates: A History of the U.S. – Mexican Twin Cities* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1995), pp. 15-16. The town of Mier was the only Spanish

settlement without a mission, while the mission in Laredo was not founded until 1789, more than thirty years after the establishment of Laredo.

42 *Bando* (decree), Viceroy Marqués de Casafuerte, February 15, 1734, publishing the royal *cédula* (order) of July 31, 1733, *Nacogdoches Archives*, Box 2Q292, Vol. I, pp. 10-11.

43 On problems with administration of troop accounts, corruption, and litigation at Los Adaes, see Galán, "Last Soldiers, First Settlers," Chapter 5 and 6.

44 Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1998), p. 38. For comparison to land distribution and ranching in Spanish Texas, see De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, pp. 75-77, and 97-118; and Jack Jackson, *Los Mesteños: Spanish Ranching in Texas, 1721-1821* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1984).

45 Joseph E. Chance, "A Short History of Land Titles in South Texas," in Kearney, Knopp, and Zavaleta, eds., *Studies in Rio Grande Valley History*, p. 75.

46 For a community study of Laredo, see Gilberto M. Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983).

47 Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, p. 230; see also, Weber, *Bárbaros*, p. 231, who mentions that as early as 1726 in Chile, Spanish authorities allowed Indian trade at frontier forts in an effort to limit and control trade, which ultimately became a failed policy. On the Bourbon Reforms generally, see José Francisco Román Gutiérrez, ed., *Las Reformas Borbónicas y el nuevo orden colonial* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1998).

48 Donald E. Chipman, *Spanish Texas, 1519-1821* (Austin, 1992), 184. The War for Spanish Succession began when King Louis XIV of France established his grandson Philip V as the first Bourbon monarch of Spain.

49 Patricia R. Lemée, "Tios and Tantes: Familial and Political Relationships of Natchitoches and the Spanish Colonial Frontier," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 101 (January 1998): 342. For more historical background about the early activities of St. Denis in Mexico and the royal government investigation into his illicit trade, Charmion Clair Shelby, "St. Denis's Second Expedition from Louisiana to the Rio Grande, 1716-1719, with Illustrative Documents, translated and edited" (M.A. Thesis: University of Texas at Austin, 1927), 18-24, 27-28, 33, 41-42; Shelby, "St. Denis's Declaration Concerning Texas in 1717," *Southwestern Historcial Quarterly*, 26 (January 1923), 174; and Fray Juan Agustín Morfi, *History of Texas, 1673-1779*, Carlos E. Castañeda, ed. and trans., vol. I (Albuquerque, 1935), 187-188.

50 Ruth Cross, *Soldier of Good Fortune: An Historical Novel* (Dallas: Banks Upshaw & Company, 1936), p. xii.

51 Vivian C. Fisher and W. Michael Mathes, eds., *Apostolic Chronicle of Juan Domingo Arricivita: The Franciscan Mission Frontier in the Eighteenth Century in Arizona, Texas, and the Californias*, with George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, trans., 2 vols. (Berkeley, 1996), 139-140, 289; François Derbanne, "Report of the Post of Natchitoches," in Katherine Bridges and Winston De Ville, eds. and trans., "Natchitoches and the Trail

to the Rio Grande: Two Early Eighteenth-Century Accounts, By the Sieur Derbanne," *Louisiana History*, 8 (Summer 1967): 256.

52 Informe, Governor Almazán to Viceroy Marqués de Casfuerte, March 24, 1724, Presidio San Antonio de Bexar, *ASFG*, Box 2Q251, vol. 10, 111, Transcription, "*los Religiosos han ocurrido á administrarles los Santtos Sacramenttos, y decir les misa algunos días festivos, cuio consuelo han apreciado mucho los Franceses por no tener Ministtro Eclesiasttia.*" Author's, and historian Frank De la Teja's, translation. The Roman Catholic Church did not directly serve Louisiana until after the French Crown took control of the colony away from the Company of the West in 1731, and a Jesuit priest named Father Vitry arrived in Natchitoches three years later; see Helen Sophie Burton, "Family and Economy in Frontier Louisiana: Colonial Natchitoches, 1714-1803 (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Christian University, 2002), 32-33, who adds that the Louisiana colony had always served French commercial interests over evangelization throughout the colonial period.

53 Galán, "Last Soldiers, First Pioneers," Chap. 8, pp. 240-266.

54 Letter, Viceroy Conde de Revilla Gigedo to don Joseph de Gorraez, February 10, 1751, Mexico City, in *Testimonios* (Royal Investigation) into whether or not Governor Pedro del Barrios' engaged in illicit trade with the French from Louisiana, together with an investigation of the arrival of forty French ships on the lower Mississippi River, *Archivo General de Indias – Guadalajara* ("AGI – Guadalajara"), legajo 104-2-11, CAT, Box 5, Folder 4a, 7, Transcription. Author's translation.

55 *Consulta*, Viceroy Conde de Revilla de Gigedo, December 20, 1751, Mexico City, *AGI – Guadalajara*, ibid., 4b, 58, Transcription. The archaeological evidence reveals many fragments of French wine bottles in abundance at the Los Adaes Commemorative Site, while French and British manufactured guns and knives appear less frequently; see H.F. Gregory, George Avery, Aubra L. Lee, and Jay C. Blaine, "Presidio Los Adaes: Spanish, French, and Caddoan Interaction on the Northern Frontier," *Historical Archaeology*, 38 (2004), 65, 69-70.

56 Spanish royal investigation into French movement of Natchitoches post into Texas and advance further into the interior, January 22, 1754, Council of War and Estates, Mexico City, *Bexar Archives* ("BA"), Mf, Roll 9, Frame No. 0469, "*comerciar, o comprar con los franceses de Nachitoos, hasta seis arrobas de Aquardiente, y diez y ocho varriles de vino, respeto aser inexcusable que los soldados, no lo executen permutando los caballos, y sillas por el vino se hizo.*" Author's translation.

57 Report, Fr. Joseph Ortes de Velasco, concerning the problems at Presidio Los Adaes, February 12, 1746, Apostolic College of San Fernando, Mexico City, *Archivo del Colegio de Zacatecas* ("ACZ"), in Old Spanish Mission Records, Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio, Texas, Mf, Roll 23, Frame No. 8313-8321; Letter, Viceroy Conde de Revilla Gigedo to don Joseph de Gorraez, February 10, 1751, Mexico City, *AGI – Guadalajara*, ibid.; see also, *Petición*, Lt. Don Joseph Gonzales, April 26, 1770, Presidio Los Adaes, *Archivo General de Indias – Cuba* 70a, OLLU, Mf, Roll 13, Doc. 46, 1; Letter, don Luis de Vergara to Señor don Athanese DeMézières, May 9, 1770, New Orleans, *AGI – Cuba* 110, Mf, Roll, 24, Doc. 16, 1-2.

58 Perttula, *"The Caddo Nation,"* pp. 207-208.

59 Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8 (Fall 1997), pp. 219 and 234.

60 Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves*, pp. 6-9.

61 Jack Jackson, *Los Mesteños: Spanish Ranching in Texas, 1721-1821* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1986), pp. 453-457.

62 Alwyn Barr, *Black Texas: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528-1995* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996; 1973), p. 14.

63 Adelman and Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," p. 829.

64 Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, *Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1991), pp. 19 and 27; Kearney and Knopp, *Border Cuates*, pp. 26-27.

65 Robert C. Vogel, "Paul Boüet Laffitte: A Borderlands Life," *East Texas Historical Journal* 41 (Spring 2003), p. 18.

66 Kearney and Knopp, *Border Cuates*, pp. 29 and 33.

67 Kearney and Knopp, *Boom and Bust*, pp. 23-25, 30-31, and 36-37; Kearney and Knopp, *Border Cuates*, pp. 30-31.

68 Kearney and Knopp, *Boom and Bust*, pp. 63-64.

69 Quote in Weber, *Bárbaros*, p. 354, n. 65, taken from historian Francis Jennings, and adds that "trading with the enemy was commonplace in English as well as Spanish America.

70 For example, see the fine essay by Raúl Ramos, "Finding the Balance: Béxar in Mexican/Indian Relations," in Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, eds., *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 35-65; see also, Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*.

Testamentos de Reynosa 1770-1820

por

Pedro Antonio Campos Rodríguez

Si hay algo ciertamente inevitable para el ser humano es el hecho de que algún día va a morir. Este evento lo martiriza, le produce dolor pero sobre todo, le atemoriza la idea de su irreversible hecatombe sobre la faz de la tierra y el destino final de su cuerpo. La tradición mexicana respecto a la muerte nos ha habituado a concebir la partida final como algo fatídico y trágico mas no como una condición inseparable del hombre, la cual forma parte de la vida misma.

No cabe duda que la muerte es algo turbante e irremisible, sin embargo, más allá de lo que creamos al respecto hay un hecho insoslayable de capital importancia, si se quiere, muy mundano pero ciertamente trascendental para el difunto y sus deudos. ¿Qué sucedería por ejemplo, si este poseía diferentes tipos de bienes muebles, inmuebles o dinero y muere intestado? Indudablemente que heredará a sus familiares problemas y más problemas porque es innegable que la codicia humana se desenlaza *misteriosamente* cuando otea la posibilidad de obtener un beneficio económico a causa del fallecimiento de un familiar, sobre todo cuando este torpemente no tuvo el cuidado y buen tino de dejar organizada la transmisión de su patrimonio redactando un testamento, dejando claro y establecido quién o quiénes habrán de ser sus herederos.

Dejar *al garete* la sucesión patrimonial parece ser que no fue una regla común entre los reynosenses de las postrimerías del siglo XVIII y principios del XIX. Para ellos, redactar su memoria póstuma debió ser un acto de conciencia religiosa y económica que otorgaba estabilidad familiar, social y económica, así como ser un instrumento que estimulaba la producción, la iniciativa personal y el ahorro. En estos manuscritos legales también podemos apreciar disposiciones, declaraciones y pronunciamientos propios

de la época que dan buena cuenta de la estructura del poder, lenguaje, conducta, maneras de pensar y ambiente doméstico de los habitantes de este villorrio. De igual manera contribuyen al conocimiento de la historia económica de la villa su ideología, sus representaciones mentales individuales y colectivas abundantes en palabras, imágenes e ideas que en su conjunto integran un ambiente mental vasto en credos y valores.

Por tal motivo, nos pareció interesante allegarnos a este universo testamentario que dicho sea de paso, ha sido poco tratado por los historiadores tamaulipecos e investigar su composición religiosa y sus disposiciones económicas, abordando primeramente su discurso teológico católico de la redención del alma y la plenitud escatológica. Así como sus expresiones formales, es decir, el sistema de conductas y lenguaje religioso conferido al individuo a través de una atmósfera católico-numinosa establecida por poderes milagrosos y credos de adoración. Segundo: examinar como estos escritos a través de sus instrucciones y declaraciones patrimoniales permiten adentrarse en el conocimiento de la organización, funcionamiento y desarrollo de la estructura económica de la villa de Reynosa. En síntesis, investigar los contenidos religiosos de los testamentos y su relación con la economía de la villa de Reynosa durante los años de 1770 a 1820.

Los testamentos del Archivo Municipal de Reynosa.

Los testamentos motivo de este estudio son el conjunto de instrumentos públicos que consignan un acto jurídico personal, revocable, libre y formal, por medio de los cuales los antiguos pobladores de la villa de Reynosa aseguraban, conforme a las leyes españolas de la época, la sucesión de su patrimonio cuando vislumbraban que la muerte era un hecho inexorable. Fueron consignados con las figuras jurídicas propias de ese tiempo. Están compuestos por un discurso y pensamiento católico ortodoxo. Forman parte del acervo documental de *Protocolos de Instrumentos Públicos* del Archivo Municipal de Reynosa, y se encuentran organizados de manera cronológica, escritos con un lenguaje

austero, donde prevalece el desorden y atropello ortográfico, además del uso indefinido y arbitrario de letras mayúsculas y minúsculas que ponen de relieve la ausencia de criterios gramaticales.

Por no haber existido en la villa escribanos reales ni del número y mucho menos notario público, no fueron clasificados alfabéticamente según el apellido del amanuense como usualmente sucedía en otros archivos del País.

Fueron enlazados en envoltorios por años, de modo general, no estaban encuadernados, ni conformaban sumarios. Por muchos años estuvieron sometidos a la indiferencia total, considerándolos como un conjunto de papeles viejos sin mayor relevancia y utilidad, llegándose a dar el caso en que un alto funcionario del Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad en época reciente afirmara:

> Y esto ¿pa' qué sirve? Mugrosos papeles buenos para nada. Que les saquen fotocopias y después los quemen.

Afortunadamente, los subalternos conscientes del valor histórico de los escritos, hicieron caso omiso de la orden de su jefe y hoy en día gozan de cabal salud.

Cabe apuntar que a pesar de esta actitud de indiferencia y después de muchos años de andar a salto de mata, los testamentos en la actualidad se encuentran debidamente protegidos, concentrados en carpetas antiácidas en su correspondiente caja archivadora, organizados en expedientes a los cuales les han asignado un número catalográfico para su mejor manejo y control. Se caracterizan la mayoría de ellos por ser de carácter nuncupativo, ya que la mayoría de los pobladores del villorrio no sabían ni leer ni escribir, por lo que muchos testamentos fueron elaborados de manera abierta, es decir, ante el Justicia Mayor o Alcalde y en presencia de testigos. Sin embargo, los hubo también redactados de manera ológrafa, en otras palabras, escritos y firmados de puño y letra por el testador.

La letra acostumbrada en estas declaraciones fue la cursiva documental. Comúnmente se utilizaron grafías similares con diferente valor fonético, no hay abreviaturas y en algunos casos se nota la influencia del latín. Su discurso es llano, no privilegia el uso de un lenguaje estilístico y rebuscado ya que se trata ante todo de un instrumento legal donde se da solución definitiva a la transmisión de los derechos patrimoniales de un individuo. La tinta utilizada fue la sepia hecha de flor del cobre y estiletes hechos de hierro y plata.

El testamento.

El testamento era una alocución confesional, una sinopsis de vida y una realidad interna donde años de trabajo, esfuerzo, esperanzas, vida familiar y económica quedaban registrados en un documento de apenas 35 x 21 centímetros. A la vez de ser un instrumento jurídico que tenía por objetivo conservar la identidad familiar y los bienes del individuo. Confianza era una de sus principales características ya que de acuerdo al dogma de la Iglesia Católica y las leyes en materia testamentaria, disponer la redacción de un testamento era una obligación como lo advertimos en las palabras pronunciadas por el visitador Lino Nepomuceno Gómez en la inspección que hizo a la villa de Reynosa.

> ... practicásemos a su nombre la Santa Visita de esta Colonia del Nuevo Santander, visitando las iglesias, altares, ermitas ... . pilas bautismales ... cofradías, hermandades ... testamentos, capellanías ... según nos parezca que conviene, cualesquiera cosa que hallásemos indecente y no ajustada al ritual romano y disciplina eclesiástica ... [1]

Asimismo, el testamento era una forma de *antiséptico moral* o instrumento redentor que limpiaba la conciencia del pecador a la vez que simbolizaba un anhelo espiritual y económico que encauzaba al individuo al bien morir, es decir, al perdón de los pecados y la salvación del alma donde la compra de ayudas

espirituales como las obras pías y capellanías habrían de jugar un papel preponderante.

Es muy probable que en la actualidad esta idea de redactar un testamento donde lo más valioso sea su fundamento divino parezca algo inaceptable, absurdo y tal vez hasta carente de todo sentido práctico pero para los habitantes de la pretérita villa de Reynosa era un instrumento liberador que marcaba la diferencia entre la condena eterna y la salvación del alma. Carlos Martínez en su libro intitulado *Testamentos y Catolicismo* señala:

> Los testamentos expresan que la muerte debe ser asumida siguiendo la enseñanza del discurso católico de la salvación del alma, encomendando hasta el último momento las malas obras con las buenas obras."[2]

En este sentido la salvación del alma era para el creyente un sentimiento, una necesidad y un anhelo que tenía como meta la conquista del bienestar sempiterno. Bienestar que se alcanzaba con la redacción de un testamento y el vehemente deseo de esforzarse y comprometerse a llevar una vida moral diáfana, así como ser un hombre piadoso en busca de la autoperfección durante su peregrinar por la tierra.

En el plano económico, el testamento permitía a su autor no dejar nada a la memoria, los buenos propósitos y mucho menos a los ofrecimientos hechos de palabra, a su vez, ponía límite a las pasiones y apetitos patrimoniales de los candidatos a ser sus beneficiarios y evitaba que los insensatos y engorrosos caprichos trastocaran la oportunidad de obrar con equidad y certidumbre. Por ello, redactar un testamento era para el reynosense una enorme responsabilidad familiar, religiosa y económica, ya que no promover en tiempo y forma el traspaso de los bienes económicos de una persona a sus legatarios significaba no sólo un desacato a la autoridad divina sino un desaliento al progreso pues frenaba el espíritu de inversión y ahorro, limitando con ello el auge de las relaciones agrícolas, pecuarias y comerciales de la población al verse reducido el flujo

de reproducción de capital y la renovación constante del capital en áreas mercantiles que generaran mayor rentabilidad.

Jurídicamente, el testamento era un acto legal serio y libre en el que una persona dejaba claramente establecidos todos aquellos asuntos de carácter familiar y personal que deberían ser atendidos después de su fallecimiento.

> Item mando que pagado mi funeral y entierro mandas y lo demás que llevo declarado en todo lo que resultare ser mío y me tocare de derecho nombro por mis únicos herederos a los referidos mis hijos e hijas que declarado tengo por tales arriba a quienes después de pagadas las dependencias que hasta el día de mi muerte se debieren según llevo declarado se les reparta lo a mi tocante por iguales partes dándoles puntual cumplimiento sin que haya dolo sentimiento o controversia para que lo gocen con la bendición de Dios y la mía como bienes suyos propios que así es mi voluntad ...[3]

Eran susceptibles de ser derogados y cambiados cuantas veces así lo requiriera el mandante. Se les podían añadir o quitar disposiciones lo que se conocía con el nombre de codicilios, los cuales requerían para su ratificación jurídica casi de las mismas solemnidades que el testamento.

> Item anulo y revoco otros cualesquiera testamentos y codicilios que antes de este haya hecho por escrito de palabra o en otra forma para que no valgan ni hagan fe salvo este presente que ahora otórgo el que quiero que valga por mi testamento y ultima voluntad por la vía y forma que haya lugar en derecho en cuyo testimonio lo otorgo así en esta dicha Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa en veinte y cuatro días del mes de agosto de este año de mis setecientos ochenta y cuatro ...[4]

Los testamentos reynosenses como anteriormente se indicaba, estaban dispuestos de acuerdo a un formato legal riguroso y preestablecido por el pensamiento hispano de la propiedad privada, la herencia y el prestigio social.

La mayoría fueron redactados de manera abierta ante el Justicia Mayor o Alcalde de la villa y en presencia de cuatro testigos: dos instrumentales que representaban al testador y dos de asistencia que representaban a la autoridad, todos ellos individuos mayores de edad con domicilio legal en la población. Los ediles, para cumplir con sus funciones disponían de un catálogo de procedimientos en el que se precisaban los requisitos generales correspondientes a las escrituras, modelos y fórmulas sobre actos y contratos más usuales en el poblado. Por ley debían de llevar un registro o minutario pormenorizado de las escrituras que suscribía y al final del año depositarlas en el Archivo público del poblado. Al término de su gestión debía de entregar a su sucesor ante testigos todos los documentos en que intervino como federatario.

La lejanía de Reynosa del centro de Gobierno en la Ciudad de México originó que las leyes que legitimaban las formas para dar validez jurídica de los actos y negocios de particulares, tuvieran que irse modificando y ajustando a las circunstancias particulares de la población. Los alcaldes de la villa con frecuencia se veían obligados a tomar providencias de acuerdo a las características propias de cada asunto en que intervenían, inclusive llegándose a dar casos en que sobrepasaban las facultades judiciales con que eran investidos por las autoridades. Cabe destacar que la labor que realizaban los ediles era más trascendental y significativa de lo que podemos presumir. Eran individuos únicos que aportaban certeza y confianza en la comunidad a la cual servían. Estuvieron investidos de enorme poder e influencia política, económica y social. Su intervención e injerencia en los asuntos de sus conciudadanos originó cambios significativos en el desarrollo de las actividades económicas y políticas de la villa. Se trataba de verdaderos actores generadores de autoridad y manipulación. Por sus manos pasaron un sinfín de operaciones y transacciones, especialmente de compra-

venta de tierras y ganado que se significaron como las principales actividades económicas que impulsaron el desarrollo de Reynosa.

Ser Justicia Mayor o Alcalde implicaba ejercer casi de manera omnímoda el poder político, militar y administrativo. La influencia o contra peso político que sobre ellos pudieron ejercer los miembros del *medio cabildo* compuesto por dos regidores, uno del primer voto y otro del segundo voto, así como un Procurador General que intervenía en todos los casos de venta y repartimiento de tierras prácticamente fue inexistente, sobre todo por tratarse en la mayoría de los casos de hombres ligados a sus intereses particulares. Los diferentes alcaldes de apellido Ballí para quienes la política se convirtió en una empresa, gobernaron y monopolizaron el poder político y económico en la villa por espacio de 29 años podrían ser un buen ejemplo de ello.

> Juan Antonio Ballí, Justicia Mayor. Años de 1776, 1780, 1782, 1783, 1785, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1794.
>
> José María Ballí, Justicia Mayor. Años de 1782, 1801, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1810, 1811.
>
> José Antonio Ballí, Justicia Mayor Interino. Año de 1791.
>
> José Santiago Ballí, Justicia Mayor Sustituto. Año de 1791.
>
> Juan José Ballí, Justicia Mayor. Años de 1795, 1796, 1797, 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, 1809.
>
> José Francisco Ballí, Justicia Mayor. Años de 1796, 1797, 1798, 1799, 1801, 1802, 1803.

Durante sus respectivas gestiones participaron activamente en la firma y certificación de poderes, hipotecas, fianzas, testamentos, convenios, venta, arrendamiento y repartimiento de tierras y agostaderos, así como en todo género de diligencias.

Significativo lo es también que en todos estos asuntos estuvieron presentes en la mayoría de las ocasiones como testigos de asistencia de estos alcaldes, individuos pertenecientes a su esfera de intereses, entre otros: Antonio Margil Cano, Juan José de Hinojosa, Antonio Domínguez, José María Ballí, José Santiago Ballí, Pedro Félix Campuzano, todos ellos operadores y especuladores en el negocio más rentable de la epoca: la tierra. Huelga decir que estos alcaldes y testigos no sólo actuaron como fedatarios por el hecho de saber leer y escribir sino que gracias a esta ventaja comparativa dispusieron de información privilegiada que seguramente les permitió influir en las decisiones de sus convecinos, catapultando con ello el juego de sus propios intereses.

Es probable que tanto poder e influencia haya sido originado también cuando el camino a la elección libre y democrática de autoridades quedó vedado, volviendo *al Medio Cabildo* y al Alcalde en una institución oligárquica que preservó los privilegios e intereses políticos y económicos de un número limitado de familias reynosenses. Este era, en suma, el funcionario público que las autoridades ungieron como depositario de la fe pública y dotación de justicia en la antigua villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa.

La redacción de un testamento era un acto solemne donde el alcalde escribía las disposiciones del mandante sujetándose a su razón, estado emocional y deseos; estas podían ser dictadas y redactadas en casa del testador o bien, en la oficina del edil. Asentados detalle a detalle en el documento los deseos del testador se procedía a cumplir con el llamado Recognito, consistente en un mecanismo que permitía confirmar la relación entre la aspiración y el propósito del mandante y la redacción del testamento.

El alcalde llevaba a cabo esta diligencia leyendo en voz alta el testamento; si el testador estaba conforme con lo ahí estipulado, firmaban el manuscrito todos los comparecientes en el evento: testigos de asistencia, testigos del mandante, el alcalde y el testador. (Las mujeres estaban excluidas para poder actuar como testigos

en estos actos legales y los herederos por ley no estaban presentes durante su firma). Acto seguido, la primera autoridad de la villa entregaba al testador el documento donde quedaban asentadas punto por punto sus disposiciones. Consumado el acto, el alcalde registraba el escrito matriz del testamento en el libro de protocolos y lo depositaba en el Archivo público de la villa.

Si bien los testamentos no consignan el momento preciso de su redacción, debió haber preexistido la convicción de erigirlos a tiempo y como una medida precautoria, sin prestarse a prisas, con calma, en condiciones normales y sin presiones, aunque cabe también la posibilidad de que estos hayan sido redactados cuando el individuo presumía que la muerte era un hecho irreversible. La letra acostumbrada en la composición de estas declaraciones fue la cursiva documental cuyo uso era frecuente en este tipo de manuscritos.

Como anteriormente se señaló, el discurso era sencillo, falto de todo elemento de ornato. Se utilizaron letras semejantes con distinto valor fonético notándose la influencia del latín. Su escritura denota reciedumbre en la representación del contenido, los protagonistas y las ideas, los cuales son enunciados en forma franca sin tener en cuenta una redacción ampulosa o rebuscada. En su hoja final los testamentos permiten observar que en la mayoría de las ocasiones el alcalde firmaba en nombre del mandante, ya que un buen número de pobladores no sabía leer ni escribir y segundo porque era el juez quien daba fe del acto. Sin embargo, también personas de confianza del testador firmaron en su representación.

> ... en cuyo testimonio así lo otorgo en esta villa de Reynosa a los [...] días del mes de febrero de el año de 1812 y por no poder firmar porque sus pulsos no se lo permitían por lo trémulo de ellos rogó firmar por el Don José Maria de Castro quien lo hizo conmigo y los de mi asistencia con quienes actúo a falta de escribano que no le hay en los términos que el derecho previene de todo lo cual doy fe. [5]

Un aspecto revelador de los testamentos son las formalidades con que estuvieron revestidos, es decir, su contexto literal, ideológico y religioso; el modo en que el manuscrito surgió en la imaginación del individuo que lo pensó, el escribano o sujeto que lo redactó y los criterios de su autenticidad, entre otros elementos.

Si bien la Jurisprudencia española dispuso de un modelo protocolario para la elaboración de los testamentos en España y sus colonias, en el caso de Reynosa estos sufrieron modificaciones en virtud de las particulares necesidades y características de la población. El modelo o arreglo del testamento utilizado con más frecuencia por los diversos alcaldes de la villa en los años de 1770 a 1820 estuvo integrado por una parte jurídica que comprendía la declaración del estado civil, los bienes que cada cónyuge aportó al patrimonio familiar, los bienes del testador, deudas y deudores; el nombramiento de los albaceas y herederos, autorización y firma del testamento por parte del justicia mayor o alcalde, firmas de los testigos instrumentales y de asistencia, anexos o codicillos y una estructura religiosa compuesta por la invocación, solicitud de ayudas espirituales y la celebración de las exequias.

Ambas partes contenidas en el ***Actio*** y sus fases: *petitio, intercessio, interventio, testificatio* y el ***Conscritio*** compuesto por el *rogatio,* la minuta, *mundum* o puesta en limpio del manuscrito, el *recognitio* y el *validatio.* El ***Actio*** en los testamentos de Reynosa está representado por la persona que deseaba expresar ante el alcalde su voluntad de mandar redactar esta memoria póstuma como lo podemos apreciar en el testamento de José Onofre Cavazos en el año de 1783.

> ... al santo de mi nombre y a todos los santos Apóstoles, San Pedro, San Pablo y a toda la Corte Celestial, para que favorezcan mi Alma la encaminen a la vida eterna bajo de cuyo patrocinio ordeno y dispongo este mi testamento y ultima voluntad en la forma y manera siguiente ...[6]

A su vez el *Actio* estaba integrado por la *Petición,* el *Intercessio* y el *Interventio.* En la *Petición* el testador solicitaba al alcalde diera fe de su testamento validándolo y autorizándolo.

> ... que valga por mi testamento y ultima voluntad por la vía y forma que haya lugar en derecho en cuyo testimonio lo otorgo así en esta villa de Reynosa en ocho días del mes de Agosto de mil ochocientos nueve, ante el Actual Justicia Don Manuel de la Fuente por ausencia del propietario a quien le rogué y suplique lo autorizara por la validación que corresponde ... en cuya virtud yo dicho Teniente usando de la facultad que por derecho me es conferida y en mi reside interpuse e interpongo toda mi autoridad y decreto judicial para dar fuerza y vigor a este presente testamento en la forma que el derecho previene.[7]

El *Intercessio* estaba constituido por las peticiones o súplicas que el testador hacia a personas, santos y deidades para que abogaran por él ante el Dios a la hora de afrontar la muerte. Comprendía tres clases de emisarios: primero, los intercesores humanos convertidos en santos. De acuerdo a la observancia católica, los santos eran modelos a imitar por los creyentes en virtud de haber llevado durante su peregrinar por la tierra una vida virtuosa y ejemplar, por ello gozaban de los bienes espirituales de Jesucristo, lo cual supone que pueden interceder ante Dios por los hombres.

> 1 ... temiéndome de la muerte como es natural en la criatura y deseando salvar mi alma para que vaya a descansar a las delicias de la gloria para cuyo fin elijo y nombro por mis abogados a el patriarca señor San José y a la Santísima Virgen Madre de Dios y señora nuestra y al santo Ángel de mi Guarda y santo de mi nombre y a todos los santos apóstoles, San Pedro y San Pablo y a toda la Corte Celestial para que favorezcan mi alma y la encaminen a la vida

> eterna; bajo cuyo patrocinio ordeno y dispongo este mi testamento y ultima voluntad y es en la forma y manera siguiente ...[8]

Segundo, las deidades representadas por Dios y Jesucristo.

> Primeramente mando y encomiendo mi alma a Dios nuestro Señor que la crió y la redimió con el inestimable precio de su preciosísima sangre; y ruego y suplico a su Divina Majestad la lleve consigo a su gloria para donde fue criada; y el cuerpo mando a la tierra de donde fue formado.[9]

Tercero, los parientes o amigos del testador que se obligaban a cumplir con su última voluntad, sobre todo en una comunidad como la de Reynosa donde los lazos familiares y de amistad eran muy estrechos y solidarios.

> 2 Item mando a mis familiares que cuando la voluntad de Dios nuestro Señor fuere servido de llevarse mi alma de esta presente vida a la eterna sea mi cuerpo sepultado en esta santa iglesia parroquial, y amortajado con el habito de Nuestro Señor Padre San Francisco.[10]

Otra parte importante en la formalización de los testamentos eran el *Interventio* y la *Testificatio* en el cual participaban los albaceas, los testigos y el alcalde, cuyo parecer era indispensable para la composición del testamento.

> ... sin que para esto haya impedimento alguno y para que se guarde cumpla y ejecute enteramente este mi testamento y ultima voluntad elijo nombro y señalo por mis albaceas testamentarios fideicomisarios en primer lugar a mi hijo don Blas de Elizondo, en segundo lugar a mi hijo don Juan Antonio de Elizondo y en tercer lugar a mi hijo Fernando de Elizondo; a los cuales y a cada

uno de por si les doy el poder y facultad bastante cuanto sea necesario y por derecho se requiera para que entren en mis bienes y ejecuten lo que llevo referido para que de lo más bien parado de ellos vendan lo que fuere bastante para pagar y cumplir las mandas forzosas y pías de este mi testamento.[11]

Y para su mayor validación y firmeza rogué al señor Teniente de Justicia Mayor de esta dicha Villa don Juan Antonio Balli que presente esta interponga su autoridad y judicial decreto en cuya virtud yo dicho Teniente usando de las facultades que por derecho me son concedidas y en mi residen interpuse e interpongo toda mi autoridad y judicial decreto para dar fuerza y vigor a este presente testamento en la forma que el derecho previene y por no saber firmar la otorgante lo hizo a su ruego don Antonio Margil Cano vecino de esta Villa conmigo y los testigos de mi asistencia. Con quienes auctuo por receptoria a falta de todo escribano que no le hay ...[12]

En el Conscriptio, también conocido como *la formalización escrita del testamento,* intervenía el agente de gobierno (escribano o alcalde) quien era el encargado de consignar de manera ológrafa los deseos del mandante.

... en esta dicha Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa, en veinte y nueve días del mes de diciembre de este presente año de mil setecientos ochenta y tres; y para su mayor validación y firmeza rogué al señor Teniente de Justicia Mayor de esta Villa don Juan Antonio Ballí que presente esta, interponga su autoridad y judicial decreto para la realización de esta memoria.[13]

Parte integrante de la formalidad del testamento lo eran también el *Validato,* el *Autenticatio* y *los sellos.* Los dos primeros se incorporaban al documento cuando los testigos de asistencia, instrumentales, el alcalde y el testador estampaban sus firmas y rúbricas en él. La rúbrica consistía en un conjunto de rasgos de forma determinada que eran parte de la firma y que cada quien ponía después de su nombre. Esta en ocasiones iba sola, es decir, no tutelada con el nombre de la persona que firmaba el testamento. El sello o propiamente dicho, el papel sellado, utilizado en los testamentos era una marca impresa que llevaba el escudo de armas y nombre del rey, así como el precio o manda forzosa que debería de ser pagado al erario público por el testador.

> ... en los términos que el derecho previene y este presente papel común que habilitaren por inopia de sellado habiendo sido testigos instrumentales a el verlo otorgar don Ramón de Larralde, don Francisco Leal, y don José Maria Ballí presente y vecinos de esta expresada Villa y de todo doy fe. (Rubricas)
>
> Juan Antonio Balíi — Antonio Margil Cano
> asistencia — de asistencia
> Manuel Ignacio Flores — Marcos José Pérez[14]

El papel sellado fue introducido en América por el rey Felipe IV, en cédula de 28 de diciembre de 1638 con el fin de servir como instrumento que diera seguridad y legalidad en los asuntos celebrados entre los particulares y las autoridades a la vez que evitar que se cometieran fraudes.

La redacción del testamento daba inicio en forma de minuta, es decir, se trataba de una nota inicial o borrador donde el alcalde registraba lo declarado por el testador tal y como iba surgiendo en su pensamiento. El *mundum,* por el contrario, era la puesta en limpio del manuscrito. En él, el amanuense asentaba detalladamente las aclaraciones, enmiendas, correcciones, modificaciones, agregados o codicilios que el testador le indicara.

Cuando el alcalde consideraba que el testamento cumplía con todas las disposiciones de la ley e instrucciones del mandante se lo presentaba para que diera su aprobación final. Si este lo aceptaba procedían a firmarlo junto con los testigos. Por último, los testamentos contaban con un *Protocolo final,* mismo que señalaba el lugar y fecha de la expedición del manuscrito. El *protocolo final* utilizado más a menudo en los testamentos locales estaba integrado por una fecha que combinaba en una sola: la fecha tópica, que expresa el lugar donde se llevó a cabo la redacción del documento y la fecha crónica, que señala el día, mes y año de su expedición, como lo podemos apreciar en el testamento de Miguel Chapa García.

> ... por cuyo motivo rogué a los testigos citados arriba se hallasen presente al verlo otorgar y para su mayor fuerza vigor y validación suplico al Justica Mayor de esta costa interponga su autoridad y judicial decreto cuanta se requiere y sea necesaria y para que conste lo firme hoy tres de enero de mil ochocientos y tres años.
>
> Miguel Chapa
> Calixto de Ayala
> Agustin López
> Juan Jose Villarreal
> Cayetano Medrano
> Jose García[15]

En su totalidad los testamentos reynosenses son originales, ya que de acuerdo a la tradición archivística española cuando un escribano o alcalde redactaba y daba fe de un protocolo o negocio entre particulares la matriz del documento quedaba anotada en el libro de registro y conservada en el acervo documental público de la villa. La invocación en el testamento era la parte espiritual en el *Actio* ya que se trataba de un elemento escatológico cuyo carácter fue predominantemente de devoción y esperanza por el enorme contenido religioso sobre el destino del hombre después de la muerte. Asimismo, es una confesión de fe pública y la esperanza

de que Dios en su infinita misericordia habrá de otorgarle al individuo el perdón de sus pecados y con ello su ingreso en la Patria celestial.

> En el nombre de Dios Todopoderoso Amen
>
> Sepan cuantos este mi testamento vieren como yo Tomas Treviño originario del Valle del Pilón y vecino de esta Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa, hijo legitimo de Vicente Treviño y de Catalina Farias ya difuntos soy cristiano católico y como tal creo verdaderamente, en el Altísimo Misterio de la Santísima Trinidad Padre Hijo y Espíritu Santo tres personas distintas y un solo Dios verdadero. También creo en el admirabilísimo misterio de la Encarnación del verbo divino en las purísimas entrañas de la Santísima Virgen María su divina madre señora y abogada nuestra. También creo en todos los demás misterios de nuestra santa fe que tiene cree y confiesa nuestra Santa Madre Iglesia Católica Apostólica y Romana en cuya fe y creencia he vivido y protesto vivir y morir como fiel y católico cristiano ...[16]

La invocación utilizada en el testamento de Tomás Treviño es de carácter manifiesto y verbal, ya que es expuesta mediante el uso de palabras y frases convenientes siempre insistentes, seguidas de un encadenamiento extenso de elementos circunstanciales y cambiantes como la invocación a la Virgen María, los santos y la Corte Celestial. Los especialistas en *Diplomática* del documento opinan que el origen de este tipo de invocación deviene de las palabras que el Apóstol San Pablo dirigió a los colosenses donde señala que todo cuanto haga el hombre lo tiene que hacer en el nombre de Jesucristo. La maestra María Elena Bribiesca Sumano en su libro *Antología de Paleografía y Diplomática* parece confirmar este supuesto al señalar que:

> San Juan Crisóstomo expresó en una reunión de escribanos: "por eso nosotros en las cartas, ponemos por delante el nombre del Señor ... pues si los nombres de los cónsules hacen que los decretos sean firmes, mucho más lo hará el nombre de Cristo.[17]

A la invocación le seguía una solicitud de ayudas y socorros para que el testador, arropado en un sinnúmero de prerrogativas espirituales y rezos pudiera encarar el Juicio Eterno de Dios y alcanzar la vida eterna.

> ... Y hallándome como me hallo enfermo en cama de accidente que Dios nuestro Señor ha sido servido darme, aunque por su divina misericordia gozo de mi entero juicio memoria y entendimiento y voluntad y temiéndome de la muerte como es natural en la criatura y deseando salvar mi alma para que vaya a descansar en las delicias de la Gloria, para cuyo fin elijo y nombro por mis abogados y defensores a mi señora la Virgen Maria, madre de nuestro Redentor Jesucristo y abogada de los pecadores y al patriarca señor San José, su santísimo esposo, a señor San Antonio de Padua, al glorioso señor San Rafael, al Santo Ángel de mi Guarda y Santo de mi nombre, y a todos los Santos Apóstoles, San Pedro y San Pablo y a toda la corte celestial para que favorezcan mi alma la encaminen en la vida eterna bajo de cuyo patrocinio ordeno y dispongo este mi testamento y ultima voluntad en la forma y manera siguiente.
>
> Primeramente mando y encomiendo mi alma a Dios nuestro señor que la crió y redimió con el inestimable precio de su preciosísima sangre y ruego y suplico a la divina Majestad la lleve conmigo la lleve consigo a su gloria para donde fue creada y el cuerpo mando a la tierra de que fue formado.[18]

Una de las características de la época en que fueron redactadas estas memorias póstumas es el sentido y significado que el hombre tenía del temor a Dios. Persuasión que forma parte de la ortodoxia católica cuyo fin era dirigir la conducta del creyente durante su transitar en la tierra por las pautas de comportamiento que su Creador o Dios había diseñado para él y que se consideraban como obligatorias y fundamentales para alcanzar la salvación eterna.

Sin embargo, Dios, según el dogma cristiano, esta consciente que los creyentes pueden caer en el pecado por apatía o tentación menoscabando con ello sus virtudes y bienestar espiritual. Por ello la deidad en reiteradas oportunidades puede perdonarles sus faltas si se arrepienten de sus faltas.

> El alma debe estar inmaculada en el alma celestial, libre de cualquier imperfección ocasionada por el pecado.[19]

Si no se cumplía con esta normatividad divina de llevar en el mundo una vida casi de santidad, al morir el hombre tenía que enfrentar el Juicio Divino y el criterio de medición utilizado por Dios estaba compuesto por el cotejo de sus buenas acciones y las malas.

> ... aquellos que han hecho el bien llegaron a la resurrección de la vida; y aquellos que han hecho el mal a la resurrección del juicio ... [20]

Si el individuo no aprobaba el balance de su vida hecho por su Creador tenía a su alcance un último instrumento de asepsia espiritual llamado *Purgatorio*, lugar de purificación para aquellos que necesitaban mayor ablución para llegar a la santidad.

> El purgatorio es necesario porque pocas personas se abren tan perfectamente a la gracia de Dios aquí en la tierra como para morir limpios y poder ir directamente al cielo. Por eso muchos van al purgatorio.[21]

Esta idea fue muy difundida entre los creyentes católicos a partir de los *Concilios de Florencia* cf. DS 1304 y *de Trento* cf. DS 1820; 1580.

Sin embargo, si el creyente tenía que transitar por el *Purgatorio,* esto no significaba que lo hiciera de manera solitaria. Para ello contaría con un sinnúmero de prerrogativas desde la tierra como misas, novenarios, rosarios, cantos, veladoras y apoyos económicos.

> Dios ha querido que nos ayudemos unos a otros en el camino al cielo. Las almas en el purgatorio pueden ser asistidas con nuestras oraciones ... [22]

El peor de los casos si el individuo no aprobaba la evaluación divina iba a parar a perpetuidad al *Infierno,* lugar de discordia, alboroto, violencia y destrucción.

Aspirar a la Salvación y Resurrección implicaba además de tener que llevar esta vida de santidad y pedir a Dios el perdón de nuestros pecados, la idea del buen morir.

> Arregla tú vida con premura, confiesa tus pecados no sea que la muerte venga a sorprenderte. Quien sabe si la tienes cercana.[23]

El cual se alcanzaba redactando un testamento que se constituía en un acto de liberación de las cargas mundanas y el pecado. A la vez que un instrumento que evitaba problemas familiares y sociales.

> A Cristo por su pasión y muerte me perdone mis pecados y ponga mi alma en carrera de salvación. Temeroso de la muerte que es natural, a toda criatura y su hora incierta deseando prevenirla con mi disposición testamentaria cuando esta llegue para salvar mi conciencia otorgo mi testamento.[24]

La muerte en la villa de Reynosa debió ser concebida como un hecho natural ya que la condición humana alcanza su cumbre cuando la vida física (corpórea) del hombre queda destruida al

estar compuesta por propiedades físicas y corrupción carnal. Mas no así el alma que es incorruptible e imperecedera.

> Yo quiero ver a Dios y para verlo es necesario morir.
> Yo no muero, entro en la vida eterna.[25]

En este sentido la celebración de las exequias se constituyó en un mundo colmado de palabras, imágenes e ideas que integraban un ambiente mental individual y colectivo rico en credos, valores, estereotipos y mitos. Su celebración se llevó a cabo de acuerdo a las expresiones simbólicas y los valores de la época en tres escenarios llenos de simbolismo, fe, devoción, temor y esperanza. El primero de ellos: la casa donde el individuo aspiraba a morir acompañado de sus familiares y amigos.

Ahí en su hogar, el moribundo se confesaba ante el sacerdote y recibía la comunión. En ocasiones sólo alcanzaba la extremaunción en virtud de su estado físico y mental, la cual se realizaba aplicando en sus oídos, nariz, boca, manos, pies y pecho, óleo sagrado.

> ... además de la frente a la vez que se oraba para que "el Señor te perdone de todos los pecados cometidos con la escucha" y se ungía las orejas; "el Señor te perdone de todos los pecados cometidos con la vista" y se ungía los parpados"; y seguía con la boca, mano, pies y pecho.[26]

A menudo el sacerdote estaba presente a la hora del deceso, su labor consistía en comunicar palabras de consuelo a los deudos citando versículos de la Biblia.

> Hermanos: ustedes han sufrido mucho al perder un ser querido. Pero en este momento de dolor podemos decir, llenos de esperanza: "Bendito Dios, Padre de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, Padre de misericordia y Dios de todo consuelo: él nos conforta en toda tribulación.[27]

Así como asistir el cuerpo del difunto rociándolo con agua bendita leyéndole los Salmos 22 y 23 de la Biblia.

Al concluir su intervención el sacerdote, el difunto era amortajado con el hábito de su santo preferido o protector. Solicitar ser abrigado con el hábito de un santo tenía por objetivo investirse o cubrirse con la santidad del beato ya consagrado a fin de que éste le allanara el camino al cielo con sus ruegos y plegarias a Dios. Esta vestimenta cumplía con una función religiosa y otra estética, además de ser un valioso accesorio que protegía el cuerpo.

> Mando que cuando la voluntad de Dios nuestro Señor fuere servido llevar a mi alma de esta presente vida a la eterna, mi cuerpo sea amortajado con el hábito de nuestro seráfico padre San Francisco ...[28]

El tipo de hábito o mortaja y los materiales empleados en su confección, como por ejemplo los fabricados de finas telas capitoneadas con un sinnúmero de hijuelas evidenciaba las diferencias sociales que privaban en la villa.

> Item Mando que cuando la voluntad de Dios Nuestro Señor fuere servido de llevar mi Alma de esta presente vida, a la Eterna mi cuerpo sea amortajado con una mortaja de capitoneada, y que sea enterrado en la Iglesia Parroquial de esta villa con entierro mayor.[29]

Es decir, marcaba las diferencias económicas y sociales entre señores y jornaleros, estos últimos usaban mortaja sin ningún tipo de accesorios.

> Mando que cuando la voluntad de Dios nuestro Señor fuere servida de llevar mi alma de esta presente vida a la eterna, mi cuerpo sea amortajado con una mortaja de pobre ...[30]

El cadáver invariablemente era velado en su casa, ya que morir estaba considerado como un acto familiar.

Consumada esta etapa, el interfecto era trasladado a la iglesia para después ser enterrado.

> La Iglesia que, como Madre, ha llevado sacramentalmente en su seno al cristiano durante su peregrinación terrena, lo acompaña al término de su caminar para entregarlo "en las manos del Padre". La Iglesia ofrece al Padre, en Cristo, al hijo de su gracia, y deposita en la tierra, con esperanza, el germen del cuerpo que resucitará en la gloria.[31]

La misa de funerales se realizaba de acuerdo a una liturgia preestablecida, por lo general era de cuerpo presente. El sacerdote vestía con estola y alba de color morado que simbolizaba dolor, recibía el cuerpo del difunto en la entrada de la iglesia rociándolo con agua bendita. Mientras los deudos, familiares y amigos decían rezos y entonaban cánticos. Después, el cuerpo era introducido a la iglesia con el rostro dirigido hacia el altar. Sobre el ataúd se depositaba un crucifijo y un cirio pascual cerca de su cabeza, cuyo significado era el rescate que el Hijo de Dios, Jesucristo, hacía de él al sacarlo de la oscuridad de la muerte: llevarlo a Luz Eterna. La homilía era enfocada por el sacerdote al misterio de la muerte y la resurrección y no al género literario habitual del elogio.

La misa de exequias no significaba únicamente símbolos, palabras y ritos, también formaban parte de ella elementos naturales como el uso del agua y el incienso.

> Item. mando que cuando la voluntad de Dios nuestro Señor fuere servido de llevar mi alma de esta presente vida a la eterna mi cuerpo sea amortajado con habito de nuestro serafico padre San Francisco y que sea enterrado inmediato a el altar mi Señora de los Dolores de esta santa Iglesia Parroquial de esta Villa, con misa de cuerpo presente y vigilia.[32]

Los funerales de igual forma contaban con procesiones, toque de campanas y la lectura de un panegírico, podían ser mayores, menores o humildes.

> Item. Mando que cuando la voluntad de Dios nuestro Señor fuere servido de llevarme de esta presente vida a la eterna mi cuerpo sea sepultado en la Iglesia Parroquial de esta Villa con entierro mayor y misa de cuerpo presente el día de mi entierro si fuere ora y si no al siguiente día con el novenario y nueve misas seguidas.[33]

> Item. 1° Mando la voluntad de Dios Nuestro Señor fuese servido de llevar mi alma de esta presente vida a la eterna mi cuerpo sea amortajado con el habito de Nuestro seráfico Padre nuestro señor San Francisco y que sea enterado mi cuerpo en donde mis hijos gusten lo dejo a su voluntad y que mi entierro sea humilde decláralo así para que coste.[34]

> Item. Mando que cuando la voluntad de Dios nuestro Señor fuere servido de llevar mi alma de esta presente vida a la eterna mi cuerpo sea amortajado con el hábito de N.S.P.S. Francisco y que se a enterrado en la puerta de la iglesia parroquial de esta Villa por la parte de adentro con entierro menor.[35]

> 2 Item. Mando que mi cuerpo sea amortajado con el hábito de nuestro seráfico padre San Francisco y el entierro sea sin ninguna pompa a voluntad de mis Albaceas.[36]

En los mayores también conocidos como *de Cruz Alta,* el difunto iba acompañado del redoblar de las campanas de la parroquia, ofrendas mortuorias, cantos, plegarias y llantos. Para el extinto la cruz significaba esperanza, reconciliación y el alumbramiento del nuevo camino. Existían también entierros dobles que incluían dos

procesiones. La primera desde la casa del finado hasta la iglesia y la otra hasta el lugar de la inhumación aunque esta fuera la iglesia. Los entierros menores o humildes llamados también *de Cruz Baja,* se realizaban sin procesiones ni vigilias, simplemente el cuerpo era llevado a la iglesia y ahí enterrado.

Sepultaban al difunto rápidamente a fin de evitar que su cuerpo entrara en etapa de descomposición, sobre todo en la época de verano donde el extremo calor de la región aceleraba dicho proceso, así como para evitar posibles contagios con la propagación de alguna enfermedad que pudiera poner en peligro la salud pública del poblado. El atuendo utilizado en los funerales fue indistinto, lo mismo se utilizó el color negro, que el blanco o la ropa de uso cotidiano.

La muerte y los sepelios se hallaban ligados al concepto de templo-cementerio-*status* social formando una sola unidad. Era común enterrar a los muertos adinerados e influyentes dentro de la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, al resto en el cementerio adjunto a ella.

> Item Mando que cuando la voluntad de Dios nuestro señor fuere servido de llevar mi alma de esta presente vida a la eterna mi cuerpo sea amortajado con el habito de nuestro Seráfico San Francisco, y sea enterrado en el primer cuerpo de esta Santa Iglesia parroquial de esta Villa pegado al umbral de la puerta mayor de ella con misa de cuerpo presente y vigilia.[37]

Este tipo de sepulturas era conocido también como tramos del entierro. El primer tramo correspondía al atrio cerca del altar mayor; el segundo a los lados del atrio; el tercero cerca de la entrada principal y el cuarto, a los alrededores de la parroquia.

> y sea enterrado en el primer cuerpo de esta Santa Iglesia parroquial de esta Villa pegado al umbrar de

> la puerta mayor de ella con misa de cuerpo presente y vigilia.[38]

Esta forma de sepultura tenía una doble finalidad: primero, la creencia de que al ser enterrado en la iglesia, el interfecto estaba más cerca de los santos ya consagrados y ellos, habiendo pasado años atrás por el mismo trance de la muerte rogarían a Dios por el eterno descanso de su alma. Segundo, al ir los feligreses a la iglesia tenían la posibilidad de visitar a sus muertos creando con ello una comunión entre el mundo de los vivos y el de los muertos.

> ... pido que se me de sepultura en la iglesia parroquial de esta villa en lugar junto a la pila de agua bendita ...[39]

Sin embargo, esta costumbre fue cambiando hacia las postrimerías del siglo XIX con la aparición de cementerios fuera de las iglesias en un lugar estratégico en las orillas de la villa.

Como puede apreciarse, el entierro fue mucho más que un simple acto litúrgico-social. Era sin duda un rasgo característico que reflejaba la mentalidad de la familia y la sociedad como producto de un sinnúmero de normas y valores morales, ideológicos y religiosos, acuñados durante generaciones. Los símbolos e imágenes que se advierten en las exequias (santos. cruces, campanas, velas, cantos y rezos) responden a una cultura católica que evidencia en sus cultos los elementos visuales más que los sensitivos. Concediendo mayor fuerza al lenguaje que personifican las imágenes dejando en un segundo plano la palabra, es decir, al oído. Para el catolicismo las imágenes revestían una forma de comunicación válida para su culto, a diferencia de su origen judío, donde se dispensa mayor fuerza al diálogo para comunicarse con Dios y se da por descontado y aún prohibido rendir culto a las imágenes.

Las mandas forzosas también formaban parte de la batería de sufragios que llevaban a la Tierra prometida a los finados, estaban constituidas por la fundación de capellanías y de obras pías, que eran la compra-venta deliberada de cosas espirituales o lo que era

lo mismo, adquirir por adelantado la entrada al cielo. A la par, las mandas forzosas eran también impuestos obligatorios gravados por la ley Real que el testador debía de pagar a las autoridades locales cuando decidía elaborar su testamento. Esto garantizaba su validez y evitaba que terceros se entrometieran en la herencia patrimonial.

> Se visitó este testamento por su señoría el licenciado don Lino Nepomuceno Gómez, abogado de la Real Audiencia, Visitador Ordinario, y Juez eclesiástico de esta Colonia, y habiendo reconocido sus cláusulas y no hallando recibos correspondientes a las mandas forzosas se percibe la omisión, que ha habido en satisfacerlas; por lo que deberán los albaceas cumplir puntualmente esta obligación, y hecho que sea desde ahora para entonces se da por cumplido este testamento por lo respectivo a la Jurisdicción eclesiástica. Así lo proveyó, mandó, y firmo su Señoría.
> (Rubrica)
>
> Lic. Lino Nepomuceno Gómez[40]

Las capellanías se constituyeron en un apoyo por demás significativo para el difunto, consistían en la entrega de una determinada cantidad de dinero y bienes inmuebles a la iglesia a cambio de la cual los eclesiásticos se comprometían a celebrar un determinado número de misas al difunto. Gozaron de gran popularidad, su fundamento religioso descansaba en la creencia de la expiación de los pecados, idea muy difundida por la Iglesia Católica a partir del *Concilio de Trento.*

La cifra mínima de ingreso a este beneficio expiatorio era de mil pesos, sin embargo, estas pudieron alcanzar cifras mayores como lo demuestra José María Ballí al fundar una capellanía por la cantidad de cuatro mil pesos.

> En esta Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa; en cinco días del mes de agosto mil set-

ecientos ochenta y ocho. Ante mi don Juan Antonio Ballí, Teniente Justicia Mayor en ella, sus Jurisdicciones, pareció ante mi presente doña Rosa María de Hinojosa, vecina de esta dicha Villa, viuda y albacea del difunto don José María Ballí, a quien doy fe conozco y dijo: que otorga todo su poder cumplido como se requiere y es necesario en primer lugar al señor Br. don José Mariño Sotelo, vecino y Alguacil Mayor de la Curia eclesiástica de la Ciudad de Monterrey ... la cantidad de cuatro mil pesos de un ramo de capellanía que fundó dicho su difunto esposo sobre ellos de cuya fianza se desistió don Francisco Pereira vecino de la Villa del Saltillo y la impongan el sujeto o sujetos de conocido abono, con la fianza o fianzas que sea de la de sus dichos apoderados, con arreglo a la fundación de dicha capellanía precediendo información de abonar con aprobación de un juez ordinario, a razón de un cinco por ciento a favor del capellán ...[41]

La capellanía podía continuar después de la aportación económica de su patrocinador, para tal fin se nombraba a un individuo denominado *patrono*, el cual recibía el correspondiente espitendio por hacerse cargo de ella y administrar su capital, mismo que además era utilizado para cubrir los gastos de la iglesia y del capellán: hacer préstamos a particulares, así como para ofrendar misas en honor a la Virgen en sus variadas advocaciones o bien, al sinnúmero de santos a los cuales se les rendía culto en el templo.

3 Item. Declaro dejarle al Señor San José seiscientas ovejas para finca de su función que mando se haga cada año lo que aporto y destino de mis bienes.[42]

Las obras pías al igual que las capellanías tenían por fundamento honrar y dar gloria a Dios a través del ejercicio de alguna obra corporal o espiritual de misericordia que se expresaba aportando una determinada cantidad de dinero al sacerdote o iglesia local.

> 24 Item. Declaro que habiendo pagado mi funeral, entierro, deudas y obras pías pueda mi pobrecita alma descansar ...[43]

Las misas, rosarios y los novenarios igualmente formaron parte integrante de estos sufragios.

> eterna pido que se me de sepultura en la Iglesia parroquial de esta Villa en el lugar junto a la pila del agua bendita, con misa de cuerpo presente y que se me diga un novenario de misas rezadas, y demas sufragios que mis albaceas dispusieren y mando a la mandas forzosas a dos reales a cada una que desisto y aparto de mis bienes ...[44]

El *Novenario* constaba de nueve misas matutinas hechas con intención de orar por el finado. El *Rosario* era una oración compuesta por múltiples repeticiones de *Aves Marías, Padre Nuestros* y *Glorias* solicitando a Dios el descanso eterno del alma difunta. Este se realizaba en la casa del susodicho, donde asistían familiares y amigos. Después del entierro daba inicio la etapa formal de luto y el denominado *Cabo de año,* que consistía en la celebración de una misa para conmemorar el primer aniversario del fallecimiento de una persona. La mujer durante este primer año vistió lo mismo de color negro que el llamado atuendo *alivio luto,* que consistía en el uso de vestidos color negro con motivos grises y blancos.

Por lo que respecta a la estructura jurídica del testamento, esta iniciaba con la declaración del estado civil del testador o la testadora. En él se señalaba claramente si se era soltero, casado o viudo, lo que permitía a su vez conocer las filiaciones de progenitores conocidos o desconocidos y todas las ramificaciones de vínculos familiares. Continuaba con la declaración de los bienes que cada cónyuge aportó al inicio del matrimonio.

> Item declaro que al tiempo, y cuando contrajimos dicho matrimonio mi esposa y yo trajo dicha mi esposa a mi poder diez y ocho yeguas de vientre con

su caballo padre diez y ocho vacas de vientre cinco añejas de dos años cuatro [...] de la misma edad y cinco o seis crías de las mismas vacas hembras y machos, una mula mansa; cien cabras de vientre.

Item declaro haber traído a mi poder mi dicha esposa un metate con su mano un colchón con su sabana y su colcha y dos almohadas, un denge de terciopelo bordado de plata y oro de dos ases usado, una caja michoacana con su llave y prestillo, ya usada.

Item declaro haber metido yo a poder de mi esposa una manada de veinte y dos yeguas de vientre con su caballo padre diez y seis caballos mansos de rienda y de dos riendas.[45]

A la aportación en especie que la mujer hacía al inicio de su matrimonio se le conoció con el nombre de *∂ote.* Costumbre muy arraigada en la región que permitía sostener las cargas comunes iniciales de la pareja y de los futuros hijos. La *∂ote* constaba principalmente en ganado y dotación de tierra que la esposa o su familia entregaba al esposo, quien era el encargado de administrarla. Se dieron además casos en que estos bienes fueron acompañados de dinero en efectivo. Esta tradición de la *∂ote* parece apoyarse en la creencia muy arraigada en la región de que tal contribución resarcía en algo al marido y su familia la carga que representaba la mujer al no trabajar y por lo tanto no aportar ingresos a la familia. Este caudal fue otorgado lo mismo a las hijas habidas en el matrimonio legalmente constituido como a las naturales, siempre y cuando estas últimas fueran reconocidas por el padre. Los montos variaron a través del tiempo, lo mismo aumentaban que disminuían esto ocasionado por el comportamiento de la economía familiar y sus haberes. De igual forma la *∂ote* fue un elemento determinante en el conocimiento del nivel de vida económico de la población así como de sus alianzas y cohesión social.

Continúa el testamento refiriendo el patrimonio del testador. Es decir, la suma total de los bienes que formaran parte de sus

haberes. Lo mismo se declara ser el usufructuario de una vivienda que se compone de catorce varas de largo y seis de ancho, con diecinueve vigas de madera de sabino labradas de suela acanaladas con su tablazón de techo, que una ventana voladora al Poniente con su marco y aldaba, así como propietario de una espada con puño de brocal y plata. No están exentos en esta descripción tres días y medio de agua para sembrar, un par de calzones de paño de castilla usados con galón de oro y charratelas de plata, dos tenedores, dos cucharas, un salero, una banca, un metate y dos cazos de cobre y en ocasiones una lista con el nombre de las personas a las que se les ha rentado ganado menor.

> Item declaro tenerle rentado a don Tomas Gutiérrez doce potrancas y dos mulas hembras de edad y diez y nueve pesos que pague Bernardino de León por su orden y solo he tenido de abono dos potrancas, una pata y una prieta y dos caballos de dos riendas decláralo así para que conste.[46]

Punto por punto por igual son señalados en el manuscrito los individuos con los que el testador tenía deudas, además sus deudores.

> 34 Item. Declaro deberle a doña Rosa Maria de Hinojosa lo que consta por su libro de caja, mando se le pague.
>
> 35 Item. Declaro deberme don Jose Antonio Cavazos y Ochoa, una vaca, mando se le cobre.[47]

Prosigue el testamento haciendo referencia de los herederos y los albaceas. Los primeros, eran él o las personas que iban a recibir los activos y pasivos patrimoniales del fallecido.

Este hecho era también conocido como los *Derechos a la sucesión patrimonial* ya que se trataba de la voluntad declarada de un individuo en su testamento por medio del cual transfería sus

bienes a título de herencia o legado a una o varias personas desde el momento de su deceso.

> Compareció de presente y ante este mi juzgado la persona de don Juan José Cano, vecino de esta dicha Villa, albacea heredero y tenedor de los bienes que por fin y muerte de su difunto padre don Francisco Cano quedaron en su poder y me pidió y suplicó me sirviera de hacerme presente en el repartimiento que tenia que hacer de dichos bienes entre los acreedores y herederos de dicho difunto su padre pues para el efecto los tenía ya todos recogidos en concurso de todos los porcioneros e interesados ...[8]

Todas las disposiciones del testador eran entendidas en el sentido literal de sus palabras. Eran sujetos de recibir herencia los cónyuges, los hijos y nietos del testador aunque este último hubiera contraído nupcias en varias ocasiones.

> Item. declaro haber sido casado y velado infacie ecclesiae según el orden de nuestra Santa Madre Iglesia con doña María Leonor García de cuyo matrimonio tuvimos y procreamos por nuestros hijos legítimos a doña María Josefa y a doña María Leonor y la segunda murió de tierna edad.
>
> Item. declaro haber sido casado y velado en segundas nupcias con doña Josefa de Sosa, vecina de Cadereyta, de cuyo matrimonio hubimos y procreamos por nuestro hijo legítimo a don Doroteo Cano.
>
> Item. declaro haber sido casado en terceras nupcias con doña Josefa Galván de cuyo matrimonio tuvimos y procreamos por nuestros hijos legítimos a doña María Trinidad, doña María Silvestre, doña María Calista, y don Juan José Cano.[49]

Sin embargo, no eran los únicos en heredar, hubo en Reynosa sobrados casos en que personas no familiares del testador recibían heredad como los amigos, sirvientes, trabajadores o hasta el mismo sacerdote de la iglesia local. La regla general de heredad en Reynosa era repartir en partes iguales los haberes entre los hijos evitando con ello problemas, pleitos y demandas.

> Nombro por mis únicos y universales herederos a los referidos mis hijos e hijas que declarados tengo por tales arriba; a quienes después de pagadas las dependencias que hasta el día de mi muerte se debiere según y llevo declarado se les reparta lo a mi tocante por iguales partes, dándose puntual cumplimiento sin que haya dolo sentimiento, o contravenencia que así es mi voluntad para que la gocen con la bendición de Dios, y la mía como bienes suyos propios que así es mi ultima voluntad.[50]

En el caso de que los cónyuges murieran intestados los bienes eran repartidos por las autoridades en partes iguales entre los hijos. Sin embargo, hubo casos en que esta ley no se cumplía porque los hijos eran desheredados (la desheredación sólo podía hacerse en el testamento, si se señalaba la causa en que se fundaba) por los padres cuando había razones de peso que lo obligaran a ello. Por ejemplo, cuando advertían una conducta nociva y reprensible en el hijo que se constituía en un peligro para la comunidad y vergüenza familiar; ya habría que recordar que en aquella época la conducta moral del individuo era severamente controlada por las autoridades, en especial por el Tribunal del Santo Oficio como lo podemos apreciar en los siguientes casos:

> Enterados de lo que nos expresa nuestro Comisario en San Luis Potosí B.er D. José Joaquín Flores de Valdés en su Carta de 2o del ultimo Septiembre, sobre que D. Juan Francisco de Mendizábal, le contó en cierta ocasión, que un Vecino de las colonias de Santander muy libertino en obras y

palabras, decía que la simple fornicación no era pecado, á que le dijo nuestro comisario, que porque no lo denunciaba, que era una Herejía, y que tenía obligación de hacerlo, y que si él se lo oído, y que respondió, que él era Juez en Reynosa, que le parecía se llamaba D. Juan Balli, que él no se lo halló, que se lo contó D. Nicolás Dávalos Vecino de Pastoriza; aunque no creía que el tal Balli, lo dijera creyéndolo; pero que si era muy escandaloso, pues tenia á sus hijas, y manceba en una misma pieza, y que lo había desterrado por sus amancebamientos: hemos acordado prevenir á nuestro comisario, que haciendo comparecer ante si, y Notario de este Santo Oficio al citado Mendizábal, le reciba su declaración con arreglo á los números 2.°,4° y 6.° de la cartilla instrucción de comisarios ... [51]

Por oficio se siguió este auto en contra de Juan Ballí, no fue sentenciado ni castigado porque para cuando llegó la orden había fallecido.

Otro caso que nos permite observar el celo con que las autoridades vigilaban a la población es el de Manuel Antonio Vázquez Borrego, que fue sentenciado por el Santo Oficio a ser paseado en la Ciudad de México con el torso desnudo y con pregonero que anunciaba al pueblo que era un bígamo, que engañó a su legítima esposa avecindada en Durango y vuelto a casar en Reynosa aduciendo que era viudo. Eso independientemente de haber recibido doscientos cincuenta latigazos en la espalda y diez años de prisión, cuatro de ellos en el temido Castillo San Juan de Ulúa en Veracruz y los restantes seis en otra prisión.

Los bienes frecuentemente heredables eran inmuebles, tierras, ganado, casas, terrenos y variados enseres domésticos.

Item. declaro haberle dado a mi hija doña María Josefa de mi primer matrimonio una manada de treinta potrancas con su caballo padre, once vacas,

siete paridas, y cuatro de vientre, seis cabras y unas vaquillas de capichola.

Item. declaro haberle dado a mi hijo José Doroteo del segundo matrimonio, una manada de veinticinco yeguas con su caballo y otra de veintisiete con su caballo y siete vacas paridas.

Item. declaro haberle a mi hija del tercer matrimonio María Trinidad cuando la puse [ilegible] Cantú treinta potrancas con su caballo, siete vacas paridas y unas vaquillas de captichelas, un colchón, dos sabanas, una de ruan y otra de lana, dos almohadas con sus fundas y unos aretes de oro.[52]

Recibir una herencia no significaba necesariamente que esta se tomara y compartiera sin mayores obstáculos, era muy frecuente que entre los herederos surgieran disputas y desacuerdos como se aprecia en el testamento de Francisco Cano, donde su hijo Juan José Cano solicita la intervención del justicia mayor Juan Antonio Ballí a fin de que su cuñado Ventura de Yarritú acepte los términos en que el testador dispuso fuera repartido su patrimonio entre los herederos.

En la Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa en quince días del mes de mayo de este año de mil setecientos noventa y cuatro. Ante mí don Juan Antonio Ballí, Teniente Justicia Mayor de esta dicha Villa, sus Términos y Jurisdicción, por el señor don Manuel Ignacio de Escandón, gobernador político y militar de esta Provincia del Nuevo Santander etc. Compareció de presente y ante este mi juzgado la persona de don Juan José Cano, vecino de esta dicha Villa, albacea heredero y tenedor de los bienes que por fin y muerte de su difunto padre don Francisco Cano quedaron en su poder y me pidió y suplicó me sirviera de hacerme presente en el repartimiento que tenia que hacer de dichos bienes entre los acreedores

y herederos de dicho difunto su padre pues para el efecto los tenía ya todos recogidos en concurso de todos los porcioneros e interesados a excepción de Ventura Yarritu que como aun de tantos le requirió para que ayudase hacer la recogida de parte de su esposa doña Calista de Cano por ser su legítima heredera como los demás a lo que dice dicho don Juan José le respondió el expresado don Ventura que no concurría ni entraba ni salía y en virtud de esta suplica para hacerme presente y para su constancia lo puse por diligencia que dicho Juan José Cano firmo conmigo y los de mi asistencia con quienes actúo por receptoría a falta de todo escribano que no le hay en los términos del derecho y de todo doy fe.[53]

En este rancho de señor San Francisco, Jurisdicción de la Villa de Reynosa y en veintidós de dicho este año yo dicho juez habiendo llegado a este expresado rancho me pidió y suplicó el mencionado don Juan José Cano me sirviera de mandarse comparecer en este mismo rancho a don Ventura de Yarritu para ver que medios se podrían conseguir para dicho don Ventura entrara en unión y conformidad en el repartimiento de dichos bienes para que fuera a gusto y con paciencia de todos los herederos y siendo que fue dicho don Ventura en este expresado rancho y en presencia de todos los herederos y albaceas le exhorté en el mejor modo que pude diciéndole y que bajo de buena unión entre sus cuñados y suegra esperara al dicho repartimiento y avaluó que hicieran para que así todo fuera con gusto y buena urbanidad a lo que respondió dicho Ventura que le perdonaran mucho y que le ocuparan otras cosas y subiría de buena gana pero que en aquel asunto de repartimiento y avaluó de dichos bienes no se mezclaba ni entraba ni salía y hace que

hicieran lo que gustasen y habiendo oído todos esta respuesta dicho albacea en unión de todos los demás herederos determinó el que se hiciera el inventario repartimiento respecto a que había un mes que habían estado trabajando todos en la recogida de los citados bienes que tan dispersos han estado por razón de la sea de lo que ha redundado grande quebranto en ellos y por motivos de hallarme con los acreedores de su difunto padre precisado a las dependencias que les debía y para que conste todo lo precedido en donde y cuando convenga lo puse por diligencia que firmo con dos testigos de mi asistencia con quienes actúo como dicho es de que doy fe.[54]

Heredar significó en ocasiones estipular cláusulas exageradas y absurdas, máxime en una sociedad como la de Reynosa donde lo más habitual era contraer nupcias en repetidas ocasiones pero tal parece que para Juan José Cano esto no tenía valor alguno y en su testamento nos permite conocer:

que usando de la facultad que me confiere la ley nombro a la referida mi mujer por tutora y curadora adbona interin subsista viuda y en atención a su buena conducta, aplicación, gobierno y natural amor ... pero si volviere a casar mando que aunque de fianza se le quite la tutela y de su poder a mis hijos y bienes ...

Testamento. Juan José Cano.[55]

Paralelamente a la herencia se contraían obligaciones y derechos por lo que los herederos podían cobrar deudas vencidas que otras personas tenían con el *de cujus,* o sea, con el difunto. Así como pagar las deudas que este último hubiera dejado pendientes como puede apreciarse en las siguientes disposiciones testamentarias:

Item Declaro deberme Santiago de la Garza [roto] pesos seis reales decláralo así para que conste.

Item Declaro deberme Julián de Alemán [roto] pesos decláralo así para que conste.

Item Declaro deberme el maestro carpintero Nepomuceno un peso, decláralo así para que conste.

Item Declaro deberme el indio José Miguel el gobernador doce reales decláralo así para que conste.

Item Declaro deberle a la casa mortuoria de Don Nicolás de los Santos quince pesos decláralo así para que conste.

Item Declaro deberle a Doña Gertrudis Treviño una vaca decláralo así para que conste.

Item Declaro deberle a Don Manuel de la Fuente cinco cueros [roto] decláralo así para que conste."[56]

Es importante subrayar que de acuerdo a la Ley vigente en la Nueva España en materia de testamentos, no era la transmisión del patrimonio lo más importante para la autoridad sino evitar por medio de este instrumento que se destruyera y fragmentara la certidumbre jurídica entre la población. Parte imprescindible en el testamento son los albaceas, individuos que por su responsabilidad y diligencia eran seleccionados por el testador para encargarse de ejecutar íntegramente el cumplimiento de lo dispuesto en su memoria póstuma: custodiar los bienes del difunto hasta en tanto lo establecido en el testamento no causara efecto, pagar las mandas forzosas, los sufragios y el funeral del mandante. Actuar como albacea era un cargo voluntario, terminal y gratuito, por medio del cual el individuo seleccionado se obligaba a desempeñarlo a cabalidad y no podían sus funciones ser delegables. El albaceazgo

concluía por renuncia o separación del albacea y cuando el testador así lo señalara. Por lo general el nombramiento de albacea recaía en la esposa y el hijo primogénito, aunque también la designación era otorgaba a personas allegadas al testador.

> ... Item. Nombro por mis albaceas a mi esposa en primer lugar y a mi hijo Julián a quienes encargo descarguen mi alma; y declaro que no tengo hecha otra memoria, y quiero que esta sea valedera y para sus mayor firmeza y validación ... testamento.[57]

> ... y para que se guarde y cumpla enteramente este mi testamento y ultima voluntad elijo, nombro y señalo por mis albaceas y fideicomisarios, en primer lugar a mi hijo don Juan José Cavazos, y en segundo a don Juan José Fernández, a los que elijo, y a cada uno de por si le doy el poder, y facultad bastante y cuanto sea necesario y se requiera para que entren en mis bienes y ejecuten lo que llevo referido ...[58]

Todas las formalidades que la ley demandaba para que un testamento fuera auténtico tenían por objetivo no sólo asegurar su legalidad sino también poder demostrar más adelante con pruebas imparciales e indubitables el entorno en que se redactó y escribió. Fueron justamente los testigos a la par del alcalde los encargados de ello, quienes al expedirse el testamento asumieron la obligación de hacer constar la identidad del mandante, ver y escuchar su dicho dando fe de que se encontraba en plenas facultades mentales a la hora de mandar consignar su memoria póstuma. De la misma manera tenían la obligación de comprender el contenido del documento así como hacer constar que la cesión patrimonial había sido leída en voz alta y apegada estrictamente a lo expresado por el testador.

Al final del la comparecencia alcalde y testigos procedían a validar el testamento asentando su firma en su parte final.

... y para que tenga validación provea el señor Alcalde de esta villa de Reynosa Don Juan José García con su judicial decreto y yo dicho juez que presente estoy certifico doy fe que el expresado y presente Don Felipe Antonio Abarca esta en su entero y sano juicio memoria y entendimiento y que la presente disposición es su ultima voluntad y para que conste lo firme en la referida villa en diez y ocho días del mes de enero del año de mil ochocientos diez y nueve, siendo testigos instrumentales Don Fabián Cabazos y Don José Maria Bravo a mas de los de asistencia con quienes actúo en los términos del derecho de todo doy fe Juan José García.[59]

En cuyo testimonios así lo otorgo en esta dicha Villa de Reynosa en siete de octubre de mil setecientos y ochenta años y para su mayor validación, y firmeza rogué al señor Teniente de Justicia Mayor de esta dicha Villa don Juan Antonio Balli que presente esta interponga su autoridad y judicial decreto En cuya virtud, yo dicho Teniente usando de la autoridad que por derecho me es conferida y en mi reside interpongo toda mi autoridad decreto judicial para dar fuerza y vigor a este dicho testamento en la mejor vía y forma que el derecho previene y por no saber firmar el otorgante lo firmo a su ruego y encargo uno de los testigos que se hallaron presentes al verlo otorgar que lo fueron don José Narciso Cabazos, José Antonio de la Garza y Francisco Quiroga, vecinos de esta dicha Villa y yo dicho Juez lo firme hecho hoy dicho día arriba citado en el presente papel común por no correr del sellado en los términos de la Gobernación de esta Provincia con dos testigos de mi asistencia, con quienes actúo por receptoria en falta de escribano real o publico

que no le hay en esta Jurisdicción ni en el termino del derecho y de todo doy fe.[60]

Otro aspecto revelador de estos manuscritos era que en la mayoría de los casos la firma o rúbrica de los mandantes no aparece ya que no sabían leer ni escribir. Motivo por el que solicitaban al justicia mayor se encargara de ello.

> ... rogué al señor teniente don José Francisco Balli, Justicia Mayor de la Villa de Reynosa por ausencia del señor Capitán lo autorizara y estando presente interpongo toda mi autoridad y judicial decreto para dar fuerza y vigor a este presente testamento en la forma que el derecho previene y no firmó por que dijo no saber hicelo yo dicho Juez con los testigos de mi asistencia con quienes actuo a falta de escribano publico ni real que no le hay en el término de la ley de todo doy fe.[61]

Los testamentos, a la par de sus aspectos protocolarios permiten además conocer como en esta población se dieron altos índices de mortalidad. Las enfermedades más recurrentes fueron el tétanos, *cólera morbus*, tisis y alferecía, enfermedad caracterizada por convulsiones y pérdida de conocimiento frecuente en la infancia e identificada a veces con la epilepsia y la mosesuela, la cual se manifestaba con movimientos compulsivos en los recién nacidos, provocados por falta de madurez en el centro regulador de la temperatura.

En el aspecto social era poco probable que se dieran divorcios de tipo legal, sobre todo en una villa como la de Reynosa, fuertemente arraigada en la concepción católica del matrimonio donde pensar en una desunión era una posibilidad prácticamente inexistente. El contraer nupcias en más de una ocasión obedeció mayormente al estado de viudez en que quedaban las personas. Un ejemplo de ello lo fue María Gregoria Balli, mujer de fuerte carácter, versada en las artes del campo y la ganadería, quien contrajo matrimonio en dos ocasiones con prominentes hombres de Reynosa.

> 5. Item. Declaro haber contraído matrimonio según lo ordena la santa Iglesia en segundas nupcias con don Manuel Gómez ya difunto de la misma vecindad de cuyo matrimonio no tuvimos ni procreamos hijos ningunos declaro así para que conste.
>
> 6. Item. Declaro haber sido casada en primeras nupcias con Xavier Domínguez vecino de la villa de San Miguel el Grande y durante nuestro matrimonio hubimos y procreamos por nuestros legítimos hijos y e hijas.[62]

Otros casos entre muchos más, son los de Felipe Antonio Abarca.

> 3 Item Declaro ser casado, in facire Ecleccie con Doña Maria Ignacia de Treviño viuda que fue del difunto Don Juan Jose Balli la primera vecina de Monterrey provincia del Nuevo Reino de León, y el segundo vecino de esta villa; durante nuestro matrimonio no hemos tenido ni procreado ningunos hijos habiendo vivido en este estado trece años decláralo para que conste.[63]

En esta primera parte de los testamentos reynosenses hemos podido conocer como este instrumento legal tenía por objetivo en primer lugar, el bien morir, es decir, cumplir con un mandato divino que se significaba como una descarga de la conciencia y el alma al dejar el testador ordenados debidamente en la tierra sus bienes materiales. Segundo, un acto jurídico personalísimo donde un individuo disponía a su voluntad de sus bienes y deberes después de su muerte. Sin embargo, los testamentos revelan al lector muchas cosas hasta poco conocidas como lo es la historia de la economía de Reynosa en sus primeros años de existencia.

Inicialmente los pobladores de la villa se dedicaron a trabajar y explotar los recursos existentes en el territorio con las técnicas de trabajo y la tecnología disponibles a fin de solventar sus necesidades básicas, es decir, desarrollar una economía de autoconsumo o con-

sumo natural basada en la cooperación simple de la familia donde el principio de riqueza vía la acumulación de bienes y capital no será una prioridad sino con el devenir de los años en que irán surgiendo diferentes apetencias y necesidades con la realidad en que vivían y con ello los cambios en los productos y en sus procesos.

La propiedad de la tierra en un principio fue comunal, en ella se practicaba una agricultura de pequeños cultivos, muchos de ellos en surcos intercalados como verduras, hortalizas, tomate, calabacín y chile, además de gramíneas como el trigo y maíz, cuyas características nutritivas, su costo moderado y su capacidad para provocar saciedad inmediata fueron a los que se les dedicó mayor atención.

La ganadería tuvo un origen modesto durante sus primeros años, fue dedicada exclusivamente para la alimentación de la población. Sin embargo, el cuero y el cebo permitieron obtener buenos dividendos en transacciones de trueque y en circulante monetario por su gran demanda para la fabricación de arreos para la labranza y trabajo, así como en la elaboración de jabón y veladoras. Constantemente tuvo que desafiar los embates de los indios bárbaros, los cuales se constituyeron en un verdadero azote para los moradores de la villa por sus constantes incursiones para robar el ganado. Reses, caballos, mulas, burros, chivas y ovejas formaron parte de las tareas cotidianas de crianza de ganado. Tareas que se desarrollaban de manera muy rústica orientada a la supervivencia; no existía la selección apropiada de pie de cría; la higiene animal era nula, amén que el control del ganado no existía y mucho menos la rotación de pastizales. Cabe señalar que la crianza del ganado mular fue de especial relevancia ya que se constituyó como el transporte por excelencia de diferentes mercaderías que se comerciaban a lo largo y ancho del Nuevo Santander, Nuevo Reino de León y Coahuila.

El comercio se realizaba en condiciones adversas. Los caminos para transportar las exiguas mercaderías producidas en la villa era en la mayoría de los casos de difícil acceso, no sólo por lo

abrupto del terreno sino por la excesiva vegetación y la superficie blanda que hacía que las carretas constantemente se atascaran. En este limitado contexto económico florecía a la par una actividad comercial que generó enormes dividendos a sus usufructuarios. Entre ellos el Capitán y Justicia Mayor de la villa Juan José de Hinojosa, al cual le tocó formalizar el repartimiento de mercedes de tierras y solares a los pobladores de la villa en el año de 1767.

> En la Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa en veinte y dos días del mes de octubre de mil setecientos sesenta y siete años don Juan José de Hinojosa, Capitán y Justicia Mayor de ella: digo que por cuanto me hallo comisionado por los señores don Juan Fernando Palacio gobernador de esta Colonia y el licenciado don José Osorio y Llamas, visitador de ella según consta a fojas veinte y cinco del testimonio título de la merced de tierras y solares de los vecinos de esta Villa para aposesionarlos a todos y a cada uno de la merced que el Rey nuestro Señor (que Dios guarde) les hizo para el cumplimiento de lo mandado por SS ars. y uso de la comisión y facultad que se me confiere debía mandar y mando se cite por este auto a todo el vecindario y se les haga notorio en día festivo y demás concurso que será el domingo que se contarán veinte y cinco, para que los unos a los otros se avisen y estén prontos el día lunes que se contaran veinte y seis del presente mes para salir a la facción de ir a posesionándolos, y en la misma conformidad se haga saber el muy reverendo Padre Ministro y misionero fray Manuel Butron de esta Villa y Misión para que por sí o por apoderado asista y concurra a ella; y para en todo cumplir con lo mandado se citen al Capitán de la Villa de Camargo o en su lugar teniente por carta misiva para la concurrencia de lindero que divide ambas Jurisdicciones y se les haga saber a los

apoderados de esta Villa don Juan Antonio Ballí y don José Matías Tijerina para que me acompañen y hecho que sea proceder a las posesiones a dicho Reverendo Padre y al vecindario como se previene en dicho testimonio y por este auto así lo provee, mande y firme con los de mi asistencia actuando por receptoría por falta de escribano que no le hay en los términos prevenidos por derecho y en el presente papel por inopia del sellado: de todo doy fe = Juan José Hinojosa = de asistencia Domingo Guerra = de asistencia = Joaquín Isidro Ponce.[64]

Lo que indudablemente le permitió poseer un conocimiento muy amplio de las tierras a repartirse y con ello realizar argucias legales y aún no legales que le facultó beneficiarse de las más rentables en función de sus características topográficas, físicas y naturales.

En esta Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa y en ocho días del mes de julio de este corriente año de mil setecientos noventa y cuatro: ante mi don Juan Antonio Ballí, Teniente Justicia Mayor de esta dicha Villa, sus Términos y Jurisdicción, por el señor don Manuel Ignacio de Escandón, gobernador político y militar de esta Provincia del Nuevo Santander etc. Compareció de presente y en este mi Juzgado, la persona de don Antonio Margil Cano, vecino de esta expresada Villa, a quien doy fe conozco, y dijo: que da y vende por si y a nombre de sus herederos y sucesores y de los que de él y ellos hubiere título y causa a don Juan José de Hinojosa también de esta vecindad y a quien su derecho representare; cuya compra hace el mencionado Juan José de Hinojosa para si mismo y sus legítimos herederos; una merced de tierras que tiene el dicho don Antonio Margil Cano en el paraje de San José por la otra banda de este río Grande en esta misma Jurisdicción ...

las que se componen de veintiuna cordeladas de a veinticinco varas de frente y cinco leguas de fondo lindando dicha porción de tierras por el rumbo del norte con tierras realengas por el del poniente con tierras de Anastacio de Villarreal, por del sur con la orilla de este río Grande y por el del oriente con tierras adjudicadas a don Miguel Cano ...[65]

En esta Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa y en diecinueve días del mes de julio de este corriente año de mil setecientos noventa y cuatro ante mi don Juan Antonio Ballí, Teniente Justicia Mayor de esta dicha Villa, sus Términos y Jurisdicción, por el señor don Manuel Ignacio de Escandón, gobernador político y militar de esta Provincia del Nuevo Santander etc. Compareció de presente y en este mi Juzgado la persona de don José María Cantú, vecino de esta expresada Villa a quien doy fe conozco y dijo: que a nombre y con poder de su padre que los es don José Francisco Cantú, también de esta vecindad y que como legítimo y heredero suyo le da y vende en venta real por si y a nombre de sus herederos y sucesores y de los que de ellos y de su padre hubiere titulo y causa a don Juan José de Hinojosa también de esta vecindad y a quien en su derecho represente cuya compra hace el mencionado don Juan José de Hinojosa para si mismo y sus legítimos herederos es a saber una merced de tierras que hace el dicho José María Cantú, heredada de su dicho padre en el paraje nombrado El Coral de San José por la otra banda de este río Grande, en esta misma Jurisdicción ... las cuales tierras se componen de treinta cordeladas de a veinticinco varas mexicanas de frente y cinco leguas de fondo lindando dicha porción de tierras por el rumbo del norte con tierras realengas por el

del poniente con tierras de don Gabriel Murguía, por el del sur con dicho río Grande y por el del oriente con la porción de tierras adjudicadas a don Nicolás Bocanegra, ...[66]

El Capitán reformado Hinojosa no sólo se interesó en la adquisición de las tierras antes mencionadas sino que también compró una merced de tierra en el paraje Las Estacas a Pedro Miguel Cano en 1793.[67] A María Susana de Tijerina en el mismo año le compra una merced de tierra en el paraje El Guajalote..[68] En el mismo paraje de El Guajolote compra tierra a Juan Miguel de Longoria en 1793. Así como a José Matías de Tijerina.[69] Antonio Ramírez le vende una merced de tierra en el paraje La Calavera en 1793.[70] Compra a Xavier Zamora una merced de tierra en el paraje El Rodeito en 1793.[71] Antonio Margil Cano le vende otra merced de tierra en el paraje San José en 1794.[72] Adquiere en el paraje El Coral de San José tierras propiedad José María Cantú.[73] También se interesa en la compra de casas y en el paraje Santa Anita adquiere una casa propiedad de José Andrés de Villarreal.[74] Sus hijos, Vicente y Rosa María de Hinojosa también siguieron la misma directriz latifundista de su padre acaparando fincas rústicas de enorme extensión.

En 1798 Rosa María de Hinojosa denuncia ante las autoridades virreinales en San Luis Potosí doce sitios de ganado mayor en el agostadero Las Mesteñas.[75] y compra a María Rita de la Garza, tierra en el paraje de Las Castañas.[76] Proporcionan un poder a Pedro Félix Campuzano para que los represente en el pleito de tierras que tienen con Domingo Guerra en el paraje de La Florida.[77] Compra Rosa María de Hinojosa a José Francisco Ballí una casa y un solar al Sur de la plaza pública de la villa por la cual paga la cantidad de ciento cincuenta pesos.[78] Su hermano, Vicente de Hinojosa en el mismo año otorga a José de Arzúa un poder para que sean agilizadas las diligencias de denuncio de tierra que hace ante la intendencia de San Luis Potosí.

En esta Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa y en cuatro días del mes de septiembre de este corriente año de mil setecientos noventa y cuatro: Ante mi don Juan Antonio Ballí, Teniente Justicia Mayor de esta dicha Villa, sus Términos y Jurisdicción, por el señor don Manuel Ignacio de Escandón, gobernador político y militar de esta Provincia del Nuevo Santander etc.

Compareció de presente y en este mi Juzgado la persona de don Vicente de Hinojosa de esta vecindad (a quien doy fe conozco) y dijo: que otorga su poder bastante amplio y cumplido como se requiere y en derecho fuere necesario a don José de Arzua, vecino republicano de la Ciudad de San Luis Potosí; para que en su nombre y representando y propia persona, derecho y acciones pueda presentarse y se presente ante el señor Intendente General de San Luis Potosí con unas diligencias, que a su pedimento se han practicado en este Juzgado real de mi cargo, sobre denuncio de tierra, que ha hecho y constan en esta Jurisdicción; para lo cual pueda dicho su apoderado presentarse ante dicho señor Intendente por escrito o verbalmente y hacer a su favor todo lo que le parezca conveniente y haga cuanto dicho otorgante haría y hacer pudiera presente siendo que para todo y lo incidente y dependiente le da poder con general administración y facultad de enjuiciar y sustituir con revalidación en forma; y a su firmeza, gastos y costas obliga su persona, bienes habidos y por haber; en cuyo testimonio así lo otorgó siendo testigos instrumentales don Margil Cano, don Juan de Hinojosa y don Juan Antonio Longoria presentes, vecinos de esta mencionada Villa; lo firmó dicho poderante conmigo y los de mi asistencia con quienes actuo por receptoría a falta

de todo escribano que no le hay en los términos que el derecho previene, de todo doy fe.

Juan Antonio Ballí	José Vicente de Hinojosa
de asistencia	de asistencia
Manuel de la Fuente	Marcos José Pérez[79]

La alianza con miembros de la familia Ballí hizo que los beneficios de los Hinojosa se expandieran. Casada con José María Ballí, Rosa María Hinojosa se interesó no sólo en el acaparamiento de tierras, también obtuvieron el control y monopolio del fielato del tabaco. En 1792 junto con Juan José Ballí otorgan una fianza a favor de José María Ballí para que ocupara el cargo de administrador de este estanco.

> En esta Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa y en nueve días del mes de agosto de este año de mil setecientos noventa y dos ante mi don Juan Antonio Ballí, Teniente Justicia Mayor por el señor Gobernador de esta provincia, Conde de la Sierra Gorda y los testigos de mi asistencia, comparecieron doña Rosa María de Hinojosa y don Juan José Ballí quienes declaran ser mayores de veinte y cinco años y no gozan del fuero de Inquisición o cruzada, y dijeron que para resguardo de la fielata de esta dicha Villa de que esta echo cargo don José María Ballí se obligaron insolidum y de mancomún, como sus fiadores por el tiempo que estuviere a su cargo a pagar todos los alcances así de tabacos como de caudales que en el manejo de ella resulten y los salarios atrasados y perjuicios que se causaron en su cobro diferida su prueba en el juramento de la parte legítima sin que para ello sea necesario haber ejecución en los bienes de dicho don José María Ballí porque desde luego se obligan como principales pagadores haciendo de deuda ajena a suya propia con sus personas y bienes habidos y por haber los que hipotecaron

generalmente a la expresada paga y renuncia todas las leyes, fueros y derechos de su favor como el beneficio de la excusión, división y demás de la mancomunidad expresando que para exacción del alcance, alcances que resulten así de enseres como de caudales, no ha de ser necesario que las cuentas cualquiera se practique esta diligencia, si tampoco otro instrumento que el testimonio de esta escritura y certificación de la cuenta liquidada por el administrador general de las rentas por el visitador que se nombrare u otra cualquiera persona que sea parte legítima y a la validación firmeza y cumplimiento de esta escritura se obligan en toda forma y dan poder a los señores Jueces y Justicias de su Majestad de cualquiera parte que sean en especial a los directores generales administradores y subdelegados de las rentas y al presente son y en lo de adelante fueren (a cuyo fuero y Jurisdicción se someten) para que a ellos les compelan y ejecuten con todo rigor de derecho y como si fueran por sentencia pasada en autoridad de cosa juzgada renuncian el fuero del propio domicilio ley si converet de juristicionen omnium judicum con la general del derecho y así lo otorgan y firmaron conmigo y los de mi asistencia siendo testigos don Matías Cavazos, don José Manuel Camacho y don Francisco del Prado presentes y vecinos de esta dicha Villa de todo doy fe

Juan Antonio Ballí	Rosa María de Hinojosa
de asistencia	de asistencia
Juan José de Hinojosa	José Antonio Madrazo[80]

A cambio de esta gracia, los Ballí-Hinojosa se obligaban a pagar un año de arrendamiento y depositar ante la autoridad de la Real Hacienda una fianza económica que garantizara la concesión del estanco. A cambio de cumplir con estas reglas que el Gobierno le

imponía, recibirían de parte del Gobierno y de manera concreta del Ayuntamiento la certidumbre de respetar la exclusividad del derecho que se le había otorgado, evitando que otra persona intentara vender tabaco. A este beneficio contribuyó y en mucho las buenas relaciones que debieron tener con los gobernantes de la provincia del Nuevo Santander, ya que en el año de 1792 Juan Antonio de la Rinaga, Administrador de las Reales Rentas, manda a José María Ballí, administrador del estanquillo del tabaco de la villa obtener una nueva escritura de fianza para seguir operando.

La documentación muestra como el clan Ballí-Hinojosa se convirtió en el mayor terrateniente de Reynosa. A esto contribuyó sin duda que concentraron para ambas familias los cargos políticos y religiosos más importantes de la villa y de tal forma estuvieron en mejor posición para vender y comprar tierra, así como paralelamente diversificar aunque sea de manera primaria actividades mercantiles, logrando mayores ingresos. Incluso es probable que en este contexto el traslado de la villa de Reynosa haya obedecido más a intereses económicos de esta familia que a problemas estrictamente de inundaciones.

Hecho que puede tener sustento si tomamos en cuenta que José Francisco Ballí, en un acto altruista y de solidaridad humana donó veinte sitios de tierra para fundar la nueva villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa en las Lomas de San Antonio. Esto no tendría nada de extraño a no ser que esta fraternal donación venía acompañada de una nueva asignación de veinticinco sitios de tierra en el paraje de La Barreta por parte de las autoridades superiores de la Nueva España, a pesar de los reclamos fundados de Pedro López Prieto para que no se la concedieran. Esto sin duda dejaría en claro que el Capitán Ballí comprendía muy bien que las transacciones con tierras generan un enorme interés pecuniario cuando se acaparan y especula con ellas. Como consecuencia de esta especulación los valores de la tierra se alteraron floreciendo la actividad crematística y con ello la disolución de la comunidad reynosense. El siguiente fragmento documental da fe de ello:

... de este hecho ha resultado que los vendedores se hallan retirados a jurisdicciones, distintas, unos y otros a congregarse a las villas nuevamente criadas buscando nuevo abrigo para sostenerse con los sentimientos de haber desamparado el suelo de su primer vecindad y creación en estos males no han tenido poca parte los justicias, y medios cabildos, por los informes, que han hecho para proporcionar dichas ventas; sin atender a que los que venden sus tierras, bien por habérselas mercedado en aquellos tiempos o por herencia de sus padres y parientes no les queda otro auxilio para mantenerse que el de su personal trabajo y el andar mendingando entre los demas vecinos un pedazo de tierra, para poder sembrar cuatro matas de maíz de que no les resulta alivio, y si mucho trabajo en favor del que les hace la gracia de prestarles dichas tierras condición con que se las seden a esto se agrega que muchos de los compradores se han agregado de poco tiempo a esta parte a las villas trayendo algunos bienes y con el tiempo van adquiriendo otros de la colonia que van estallando con notable perjuicio y sin atender a que esta prohibida por varias ordenes la sacar de veintre a otros distintos a mas de que los de esta clase no dan el [...] a los pueblos en sus cargas con [...] y se les confiere mayor trabajo a los demas vecinos pobladores como se está viendo en prohibir como por la presente prohíbo a todos los justicias y sus lugar tenientes de las villas de esta gobernación de mi cargo celebren escriturar de ventas de tierras mercedadas a los pobladores legítimos y a los comprendidos en el auto de visita; reviniendo a dichos justicias que en manera alguna consientan ventas otras paso extrajudicial que no sea padres a hijos o legítimos herederos; con lo que vivían quietos en sus respectivos vecindarios por el

amor que es regular tengan al suelo donde nacieron y tienen enterrados a sus padres.[81]

Sin títulos de propiedad y desplazados de sus tierras, muchos de pobladores de la villa y la región -como apunta el documento- optaron por emigrar a otros lugares, o bien, contratarse como jornaleros. Sin embargo, la embestida pecuniaria de la tierra trajo aparejado un fenómeno aún mayor: el de la vagabundez ... que llegó a convertirse en un serio problema social del cual da cuenta el alcalde José Francisco Ballí en 1799 al emitir un bando donde enfático prohibe terminantemente a los pobladores proporcionar ropa, alimento y todo género de apoyos a los vagos.

Las condiciones de sujeción en que se encontraba la mayoría de la población reynosense con relación a las autoridades políticas, tanto Novo Santanderinas como las locales, impidió su autodesarrollo económico. Por ello se vieron obligados a reproducir sus condiciones de existencia dedicados exclusivamente al trabajo en sus tierras y el pastoreo de sus pocos ganados. Lo que a la postre terminó por ocasionar una fuerte corriente migratoria de nativos de esa villa. La actividad mercantil quedó también en manos de la familia Ballí-Hinojosa, quienes fungieron como comerciantes intermediarios de diversos productos transportados desde el Este de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica al Nuevo Reino de León y Coahuila.

Bajo las condiciones antes descritas es poco probable la idea generalizada de que el cambio de la villa de Reynosa a las Lomas de San Antonio obedeciera exclusivamente al anegamiento producido por el Río Grande del Norte. Los testamentos nos permiten demostrar documentalmente que en el traslado de la villa tuvo más peso el factor económico que el natural, debido sobre todo a los monopolios de la tierra, las actividades mercantiles y el tabaco, que tuvo una gran demanda en la región.

Conclusión

¿Qué queda después de la lectura y análisis del contenido de los testamentos? Queda el conocimiento de la antigua Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Reynosa. Mundo complejo que refleja su vida cotidiana, costumbres, prejuicios, estructura económica y política. Así como su entorno doméstico. Son asimismo, instrumentos que nos permiten familiarizarnos con un universo intransigente y opresor, cuyas ideas, imágenes y estereotipos, son introyectados al individuo y la colectividad a través de los supuestos de la religión Católica y el poder omnímodo de las autoridades novosantanderinas. Poderes ambos incuestionables que actuaron siempre de manera enajenante y despótica.

Tales documentos nos permiten, además, romper con los *clichés* históricos del pasado de la ciudad anclados frecuentemente en mitos, tradiciones y en historias orales superficiales y subjetivas que han distorsionado nuestro pretérito hasta convertirlo en repeticiones monótonas que a nadie interesan. Los testamentos permiten, también, abrir la puerta a otros puntos vista e investigación de la historia de Reynosa. Historia que por cierto ocupa urgentemente de enfoques novedosos cimentados en teorías, metodologías y disciplinas que hagan del quehacer histórico de la ciudad algo objetivo, profesional.

Cabe, por último, precisar que estas líneas son apenas una primera aproximación a un tema por demás amplio y complejo que requiere todavía de muchas horas de lectura y reflexión y que seguramente en un futuro habrá de traducirse en la publicación de un libro que formará parte de la historiografía de Reynosa.

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Aparato Crítico Testamentos

Siglas:

A.M.R. Archivo Municipal de Reynosa.

P.I.P. Protocolos de Instrumentos Públicos.
C.P. Comunicados de la Presidencia.
A.G.N. Archivo General de la Nación.

Notas

1 AMR. PIP. C.3. Exp. 12. 2 F.

2 Carlos Martínez, *Testamentos y Catolicismo* (Bogot"a, Colombia: Editorial Nacer, 1971), p. 72.

3 Testamento. Salvador Salamea. 1785. A.M.R. P.I.P. C1. EXP. 23. 5F.

4 Op. cit., A.M.R. P.I.P. C1. EXP. 23. 5F.

5 Testamento. Santiago Ballí. 1812. A.M.R. P.I.P. C4. EXP. 150. 2F.

6 Testamento. José Onofre Cavazos. 1783. A.M.R. P.I.P. C1. EXP. 22. 5F.

7 Testamento. Juana Francisca de la Garza. 1809. A.M.R. P.I.P. C3. EXP. 130. 4F.

8 Testamento. José Miguel de la Garza. 1797. A.M.R. P.I.P. C2. EXP. 88. 4F.

9 Ídem. Testamento. José Miguel de la Garza. 1797.

10 Testamento. Felipe Antonio Abarca. 1819. A.M.R. P.I.P. C4. EXP. 160. 6F.

11 Testamento. Francisca Xaviera de la Garza. 1785. A.M.R. P.I.P. C1. EXP. 24. 4F.

12 Ídem. Testamento. Francisca Xaviera de la Garza. 1785.

13 Op. cit., Testamento. José Onofre Cavazos. 1783.

14 Ídem. Testamento. Francisca Xaviera de la Garza. 1785.

15 Testamento. Miguel Chapa García. A.M.R. P.I.P. C3. EXP. 110. 4F.

16 Testamento. Tomás Treviño. 1801. A.M.R. P.I.P. C3. EXP. 104. 3F.

17 María Elena Bibriesca Sumano, *Antología de Paleografía y Diplomática* (México, D.F.: A.G.N, 1986), p. 56.

18 Op. cit., Testamento. Tomás Treviño. 1801.

19 Francisco Cuevas Altamirano, *Por El Espíritu Viviréis* (Barcelona, España: Editorial Fontana, 1908), p. 128.

20 Ídem. Pág. 30.

21 Ídem. Pág. 145.

22 Ídem. Pág. 119.

23 Ídem. Pág. 112.

24 Testamentado. Domingo Guerra. Reynosa, 1808. A.M.R. P.I.P. C3. EXP. 123. 4F.

25 Martha López Carmona, *Santa Teresa de Jesús* (Madrid, España: Editorial Alcanzar, 1935), p. 86.

26 Armando Lobato Jiménez, *Las exequias católicas* (Cali, Colombia: Editorial Amanecer, 1977), pp. 58-59.

27 La Biblia. Versión Reina Valera. Libro de 2°. a los Corintios. Capítulo 1. Versículo 3-4.

28 Op. cit., Francisca Xaviera de la Garza. 1785.

29 Testamento. Antonio Margil Cano. 1809. A.M.R. P.I.P. C4. EXP. 143. 2F.

30 Testamento. José Antonio Villanueva. 1815. A.M.R. P.I.P. C4. EXP. 155. 3F.

31 La Biblia. Versión Reina Valera. Libro 1°. a los Corintios. Capítulo 15. Versículos 42 al 44.

32 Testamento. Juan Antonio Ballí. 1798. A.M.R. P.I.P. C3. EXP. 92. 4F.

33 Testamento. Juan Francisco Cano. 1781. A.M.R. P.I.P. C2. EXP. 67. 6F.

34 Testamento. Martín de la Garza. 1807. A.M.R. P.I.P. C3. EXP. 118. 4F.

35 Testamento. José Ramón López. 1801. A.M.R. P.I.P. C3. EXP. 102. 3F.

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La Guerra de 1847 y la inevitabilidad "retórica" de la derrota

por

Arturo Zárate Ruiz

Ciento sesenta años han transcurrido ya tras la Guerra de 1847. Ahora es un momento extraordinario para reflexionar sobre la agresión de Estados Unidos contra México. Quiero en esta ocasión especial revisar tres documentos desde mi perspectiva profesional: las artes de la comunicación. Dos de los textos abordaron el tema de la guerra justo cuando iba a ocurrir; otro más justo después de que ocurrió. Me refiero a *The War in Texas; a review of facts and circumstances*, de Benjamín Lundy;[1] a *El Puerto de Matamoros en 1844*, de Manuel Payno;[2] y al *Gran romance de los primeros traquidos de la guerra del yanqui*, de Guillermo Prieto.[3] Con ellos quiero notar lo que muchos comunicadores sabemos, pero aun mejor un buen soldado: no sólo con armas sino también con palabras se forjan las victorias, o las derrotas.

Lundy y Payno de algún modo previeron la derrota mexicana. Pero lo hicieron de tal manera que quien de lleno les creyera en su tiempo no podría sino cruzarse de brazos por considerar la catástrofe inevitable. En contraste, Prieto, una vez ocurrida ésta, descubrió que en alguna medida lo "inevitable" no era del todo así. Aunque ya tarde, consideró que de haber obrado algunos mexicanos en un sentido en vez de otro, el curso de los acontecimientos pudiese haber sido distinto.

Veamos los dos primeros textos. Aunque no carecen de numerosos méritos, no puedo dejar de notar un aspecto en ellos que los desvirtúa: su retórica es coja; frente al problema, en lugar de vislumbrar soluciones, simplemente anticipan la derrota; ¡tal vez ante su "situación retórica"[4] no existía solución posible!

Para empezar, pongamos en claro que los textos de Lundy y de Payno no poseen casi nada en común, salvo su preocupación frente a la inminente guerra de Estados Unidos contra México. Para Lundy, la Guerra de Texas no era sino un incidente más dentro de una conspiración colosal de esclavistas y de especuladores de bienes raíces, interesados en perpetuar y generalizar la esclavitud y el comercio de esclavos en toda América del Norte. Los conspiradores perpetraban sus perversos planes extendiendo los territorios esclavistas de Estados Unidos hacia el oeste. Minimizaban así la oposición creciente a la esclavitud en los estados libres, en el norte de su nación. Es más, para cumplir este malvado esquema, los conspiradores no dudarían en arrebatar a México nuevos territorios.

Para Payno, la guerra de Texas y la inminente agresión americana eran sólo una pieza adicional de información para realzar el tema de su ensayo: Matamoros, un "puerto," como el podía bien recordar esta región tras vivir en ella un tiempo como oficial de aduanas.

Hay un aspecto adicional que comparten los textos de Lundy y de Payno: el problema que avistan los rebasa. Ninguno puede ofrecer una respuesta retórica adecuada a la inminente guerra. Incluso, cada texto puede describirse como afectado por una dolencia retórica. El discurso de Lundy posee las características de lo que puede llamarse "estilo paranoide" de oratoria,[5] mientras que el discurso de Payno muestra las características de un reporte de viajes de un "observador desligado y distante": ése es el contexto en que nos avisa de la cercanísima tragedia.

Ciertamente, Lundy es reconocido por muchos autores contemporáneos suyos y nuestros como la persona mejor informada respecto a la Guerra de Texas.[6] Su ensayo al respecto, y muchos otros que escribió, se caracterizan por la sorprendente acumulación de evidencia específica sobre la expansión esclavista en Texas. Lundy incluye referencias a las leyes mexicanas abolicionistas y las esclavistas de los rebeldes texanos, así como al vigor que se les daba a esas leyes. En forma acumulativa cita las preocupaciones

centrales de los líderes rebeldes en Texas, respecto a reestablecer la esclavitud en la tierra que México les permitió colonizaran y en otros territorios mexicanos. Denunció el no tan publicitado pero firme propósito de los líderes "independentistas" en favor de la anexión de Texas y otros territorios a los Estados Unidos de América, desde su misma llegada a los alguna vez territorios mexicanos. Documentó la financiación y las instrucciones mercenarias que recibieron los líderes rebeldes por parte de los especuladores de bienes raíces, los tratadistas de esclavos, y algunos políticos de alto nivel y elementos de las fuerzas armadas estadounidenses, contraviniendo todos las leyes y la Constitución de los Estados Unidos.

Además, la retórica de Lundy fue destacada en el contexto del movimiento abolicionista en los Estados Unidos. Como bien refiere Merton L. Dillon, Lundy fue uno de los primeros exponentes del pensamiento anti-esclavista que trascendió los argumentos puramente religiosos del debate y lo enmarcó en el contexto social, constitucional y legal.[7] Entre otros méritos, Lundy publicitó el hecho, entonces silenciado, de que los negros liberados podían sin duda integrarse muy bien en sociedades igualitarias, y participar de manera civilizada en la vida de sus comunidades, según al mismo Lundy le tocó constatarlo con los esclavos fugitivos, primero en el Texas mexicano, y luego en otros territorios progresistas de México, por ejemplo, Matamoros.[8] Lundy incluso previó que la controversia en torno a la esclavitud trascendería el problema de la servidumbre del negro. Como el debatió, y como, de manera asociada, John Quincy Adams dramatizó con toneladas de cartas que requerían respuesta de los congresistas (de ser efectivo el derecho a la petición) pero no la obtuvieron, las libertades de todos los americanos estaban también en peligro así como la misma unión americana, por la lucha de facciones detonada por la esclavitud. Lundy así predijo:

> ... al pelear por la anexión de Texas a los Estados Unidos ... ellos estarán peleando, en un periodo no

distante, por la inevitable DISOLUCIÓN DE LA UNIÓN AMERICANA.[9]

Haciendo eco a Lundy, John Quincy Adams no solo profetizó la disolución de Estados Unidos, sino también la destrucción de México y la Guerra Civil americana:

> No veo otra alternativa sino la de que toda la confederación mexicana sea barrida por nuestros especuladores de bienes raíces y por nuestros esclavistas, y que la disolución de nuestra propia unión precederá la lucha final entre esclavitud y libertad.[10]

Advertido por Lundy, Adams intuye y anuncia así el *Discurso de la Casa Dividida* de Abraham Lincoln: la nación no podría sostenerse más unida si una mitad era libre y otra esclava; una facción finalmente habría de prevalecer.

El Puerto de Matamoros en 1844 de Manuel Payno es también una pieza retórica excepcional, y pertenece a una serie de artículos periodísticos publicitando el área del río Bravo.[11] Es un reporte de viajes límpido, tratando de atraer la atención mexicana hacia esta (adorable para nosotros, remota para otros) región, destinada a convertirse en la frontera de México con Estados Unidos. Con él, Payno reanimó de alguna manera la propuesta de Fr. Servando Teresa y Mier en favor de colonizar el área para poner un alto a la expansión americana:

> La raza anglo-americana, por ese orden invariable y al parecer milagroso con que se forman las sociedades, debe extenderse de una manera rápida y terrible en todos los desiertos de Tejas; la frontera trazada por la naturaleza, debe ser el Río Bravo; la frontera que trace la política del gobierno debe ser Matamoros; así pues, debe formarse allí esa línea que divida la raza invasora de la propietaria y poner

un dique para evitar ese cáncer lento, pero seguro, que corroe el territorio mexicano.[12]

Según Payno, el error de colonizar Texas con angloamericanos debía corregirse poblando los restantes territorios del norte con gente similar a los mexicanos, por ejemplo, provenientes de Galicia.[13] Pero, siendo más una descripción de Matamoros que una discusión de la inminente guerra, el ensayo de Payno se dirige menos a los estadistas mexicanos que a los potenciales inmigrantes a esta región. Después de todo—se desprende de la narrativa de Payno—este puerto no era tan desagradable e infame como alguna gente pudiera creer. Ciertamente se hallaba en medio del desierto, y por ello mucha de su población no podía ser más que de trabajadores modestos. Con todo, esta ciudad destacaba por su firme progreso y crecimiento—dejando detrás a Reynosa—, y, en marcado contraste con el resto de México, se veía libre de esa abundancia de mendigos y basura entre las clases más pobres. Los matamorenses podrían aparentar un carácter "rudo y áspero," cuando en realidad lo que mostrarían sería una inigualable franqueza y amabilidad, muy especialmente entre sus mujeres bellísimas y blancas como alabastro. Los indios alguna vez asolaron el área, pero la ciudad contaba ya con las necesarias fortificaciones para prevenir estas incursiones. Su clima era horrible y extremoso, con un insoportable verano lleno de mosquitos y, para sorpresa de muchos matamorenses hoy día, con copiosas nevadas durante el invierno. Sin embargo, este clima era saludable, especialmente porque los resfríos no eran tan comunes como en el altiplano. El paisaje era monótono, sin grandes árboles por los fuertes vientos, y el río de manera sorpresiva cambiaba con violencia su curso causando severos problemas en el trazo de las calles. Aun así, la ciudad gozaba ya de un teatro, de varios parques, de escuelas públicas, y sus aceras estaban bien construidas y sus calles contaban con iluminación artificial. Era mentira que el costo de vida en Matamoros fuese alto, pues era tan barato como en la ciudad de México, con el beneficio de que muchos de sus productos e incluso lujos se importaban de los Estados Unidos. De hecho,

los hogares y casas matamorenses estaban muy americanizados. Y aunque los matamorenses no pensaban en otra cosa para comer más que en sus excelentes carnes, afortunadamente esta dieta se había ya enriquecido con la introducción de las tortillas de maíz y algunos vegetales. En resumen, para Payno Matamoros no era tan horrible como muchos otros visitantes lo pintaban. Sin embargo, frente a la inminente guerra, no nos dice nada más, y con mucho escepticismo, que a México le valdría la pena poblar esta región.

Los discursos de Lundy y de Payno, por supuesto, sufrían de un contexto con muchas limitantes. Tal vez su situación retórica era insoluble. Tal vez la capacidad de concebir respuestas para resolver el problema fue pobre porque simplemente no existía entonces la plataforma pública que respondiese a tal discurso.

Así, Lundy no fue exactamente un abolicionista, porque nunca esperó poder abolir la esclavitud en los Estados Unidos. Prácticamente estaba prohibido hablar del abolicionismo en el Congreso, para no mencionar del riesgo mortal de aventurarse a hacerlo en los estados sureños, donde los ideólogos de los dueños de esclavos se dedicaban a encontrarle bendiciones a la esclavitud, y consideraban ya como necesario el no reducir ésta a los negros sino aplicarla también a otras personas de bajo nivel social.[14] Así, la esperanza de Lundy no iba más allá de extraditar esclavos libres, primero al estado mexicano de Texas, y luego a otros territorios mexicanos libres donde los negros demostraron una gran capacidad de integración social.[15]

Payno reconoció que el plan de establecer una colonia de gallegos en el borde del río Nueces fracasó. Por tanto, su única esperanza se hallaba en que la expansión americana no rebasase el río Bravo.[16]

Sin duda, el estado de los asuntos públicos era tan terrible en ambas naciones que pretender una retórica brillante que congregase públicos, generase el debate y facilitase la resolución civilizada de conflictos no sería más que fantasiosa. En estos términos puede entenderse por qué ambos textos confrontaron la inminente guerra con resignación, y transformaron el discurso,

de un instrumento que argumenta y resuelve problemas, en un vehículo para simplemente expresar impotencia y profetizar el evento inevitable: la derrota.

Pero los textos de Lundy y de Payno contienen fallas intrínsecas. Lundy nos habla de conspiraciones colosales. Como Hofstadter lo ha demostrado, el hacerlo así genera un discurso enfermizo que puede identificarse como "estilo paranoide". En el caso de Lundy, su discurso quizá no sufriera el "gran salto de lo evidente a lo increíble",[17] pues era creíble que existieran, entre los sureños, planes para expandir la esclavitud y para arrebatar sus territorios a México. El caso, sin embargo, es que una teoría colosal de conspiración, por su tamaño y su complejidad, resiste una discusión civilizada en la plataforma pública, y por tanto corrompe y anula toda retórica.

Existían las alternativas en el discurso. En vez de someter a toda una sociedad, los sureños, al repudio por medio de una teoría de conspiración intrincada y enorme, el orador pudo aspirar a lo pequeño. Lundy reconoció, por ejemplo, que Aaron Burr fue condenado por alta traición, tras contravenir la Constitución americana y armar un ejercito para conquistar México. Quizá sea buena propaganda hablar de conspiraciones, pero se corrobora como más efectivo, desde la perspectiva retórica, el simplemente enjuiciar y condenar a delincuentes concretos. Ahora bien, la grandeza no es una alternativa retórica que se deba excluir, como lo probó Lincoln. Nunca comprometiendo sus principios, Lincoln sin embargo buscó los mecanismos, la creatividad y el debate público abiertos. Tuvo en mente por ejemplo que, si en algún momento, su *Primer Discurso Inaugural* podría carecer de una audiencia adecuada para recibir su mensaje en favor del federalismo, en otros momentos otras audiencias recibirían tal mensaje y harían de él fundamento para las "libertades americanas".

Payno, tan desligado y tan distante, con un reporte propio de un viajero a lo largo de tierras exóticas, arruinó automáticamente su esfuerzo de demostrar que Matamoros, después de todo, era parte

de México, incluso un territorio donde lograban su emancipación los esclavos, por ejemplo Tom y Esau, quienes "pertenecieron" al presidente texano Sam Houston. La narrativa de Payno es bella y su estilo de una deliciosa simplicidad, pero sus referencias a los matamorenses no fueron más próximas que las del pintor José María Velasco a caracteres vivos y concretos en sus admirables pinturas paisajistas de volcanes. La preocupación de Payno no fue la gente, ni siquiera la nación, ni qué hablar la libertad de los esclavos, sino sólo hablar de un territorio cuya posesión anticipó que perdería México.

Como contraste con Payno, quiero mencionar el *Gran romance* de Guillermo Prieto. Ciertamente es posterior a la guerra. Ciertamente lo pronunció en una situación muy distinta a la vivida por Payno. Sin embargo, ambos fueron aduanales en Matamoros en momentos previos a la guerra y ambos, por tanto, tuvieron una percepción muy cercana de lo que vendría y finalmente vino.

Aun así, Payno abordó la guerra y la perdida de territorios como inevitables, mientras Prieto se resistió a pensar, aun después del conflicto, en la inevitabilidad de la derrota. Prieto, por ejemplo, sin pelos en la lengua, atribuye a Mariano Paredes Arrillaga el que los mexicanos no hubiésemos respondido con prontitud y eficacia a la invasión norteamericana:

> Los soldados mexicanos
> hambrientos y en abandono,
> con malas armas, sin parque,
> resentían los trastornos
> de la traición de Paredes ...[18]

Para Prieto, una respuesta eficaz pudo ser posible. Soldado en las batallas de Palo Alto y Resaca dela Guerra, Guillermo Prieto escribió:

Hay un momento propicio
pues los contrarios son pocos;
Ampudia su plan ordena,
que era certero y juicioso,
pero en el instante mismo
que va a ejecutarlo él propio,
le anuncian que ya Paredes
en el poder, veleidoso
a Arista encomienda el mando
para que le acaten todos.[19]

Prieto además lamenta la división que se gestó así en el ejército mexicano:

Ampudia y Arista en antes
guardaban hondos enconos
que sembraron la discordia
y que engendraron trastornos;
pues cuando pasiones viles
hacen penetrar su soplo
en las alturas del mando
con disimulado embozo,
los más previsores planes
se tornan desgracia y polvo;
en Palo Alto y en la Resaca
de esto dieron testimonio ...
Armas, pertrechos, fusiles
y parque y nada se salva.
Así terminó el encuentro
en Palo Alto y Resaca;
que preparó la discordia
aliada con la ignorancia.[20]

Para Prieto, existieron las alternativas, y la derrota no era inevitable. Ampudia, quien por años defendió la plaza de Matamoros y mantuvo a raya a los texanos, debió conservar el mando, no el titubeante Mariano Arista.

Pero no es mi intención adherirme aquí a la opinión de Guillermo Prieto. Mi intención es notar la diferencia entre dos textos que abordan la derrota frente a Estados Unidos como inevitable con otro texto que, aun ocurrida ya la catástrofe, la consideró como accidental, asociada más bien a errores y a decisiones equivocadas de los hombres.

En conclusión, creo que vale la pena revisar cómo el discurso público bueno y apropiado, o el fallido y enfermizo, participan en darle un curso u otro a nuestra historia.

El Colegio de la Frontera Norte

Referencias

1 [Benjamin Lundy] *The War in Texas; a Review of Facts and Circumstances, Showing that this Contest is a Crusade Against Mexico, Set on Foot and Supported by Slaveholders, Land-Speculators, &c., in Order to Re-Establish, Extend, and Perpetuate the System of Slavery and the Slave Trade,* [Second Edition, Revised, and Enlarged] by a Citizen of the United States (Philadelphia: Printed for the Publishers by Henrihaw and Guam. N°. 7. Carter's Alley), (Publicada originalmente en 1836).

2 M. P. [Manuel Payno], *El Puerto de Matamoros en 1844,* (México: Biblioteca de Historiadores Mexicanos, Editor Vargas Rea, 1951).

3 Guillermo Prieto, *Gran romance de los primeros traquidos de la guerra del yanqui,* http://www.prato.linux.it./.

4 Una "situación retórica" es aquella en que se necesita usar del discurso para resolver un problema público de manera civilizada. Ver Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation", *Philosophy of Rhetoric,* 1 (Enero, 1968), p. 1.

5 Ver Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays,* (Nueva York: Knopf, 1965).

6 Ver Merton L. Dillon, *Benjamin Lundy and the Quest for Negro Freedom,* (University of Illinois Press, 1966), p. 227.

7 Ver Merton L. Dillon, *Benjamin Lundy and the Quest for Negro Freedom,* (University of Illinois Press, 1966), pp. 235–236.

8 Cfr., Rosalie Schwartz, *Across the Rio To Freedom,* (The University of Texas at El Paso), pp. 20–24.

9 [Benjamin Lundy] *The War in Texas; a Review of Facts and Circumstances, Showing that this Contest is a Crusade Against Mexico, Set on Foot and Supported by Slaveholders, Land-Speculators, &c., in Order to Re-Establish, Extend, and Perpetuate the System of Slavery and the*

Slave Trade, [Second Edition, Revised, and Enlarged] by a Citizen of the United States (Philadelphia: Printed for the Publishers by Henrihaw and Guam. N°. 7. Carter's Alley), (Publicada originalmente en 1836), pp. 33.

10 John Quincy Adams to Lundy, 27 de junio de 1836. Adams Papers.

11 Ver M. P. [Manuel Payno], *El Puerto de Matamoros en 1844*, (México: Biblioteca de Historiadores Mexicanos, Editor Vargas Rea, 1951), p. 19.

12 M. P. [Manuel Payno], *El Puerto de Matamoros en 1844*, (México: Biblioteca de Historiadores Mexicanos, Editor Vargas Rea, 1951), p. 20.

13 Ver M. P. [Manuel Payno], *El Puerto de Matamoros en 1844*, (México: Biblioteca de Historiadores Mexicanos, Editor Vargas Rea, 1951), p. 21.

14 Ver Merton L. Dillon, *Benjamin Lundy and the Quest for Negro Freedom*, (University of Illinois Press, 1966); Gilbert Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse*, (Peter Smith Publisher Inc., 1964), 109–137; Russell Nye, *Fettered Freedom Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy 1830-1860*, (Michigan State College Press, 1949).

15 Ver, Rosalie Schwartz, *Across the Rio To Freedom*, (The University of Texas at El Paso).

16 M. P. [Manuel Payno], *El Puerto de Matamoros en 1844*, (México: Biblioteca de Historiadores Mexicanos, Editor Vargas Rea, 1951), pp. 20–22.

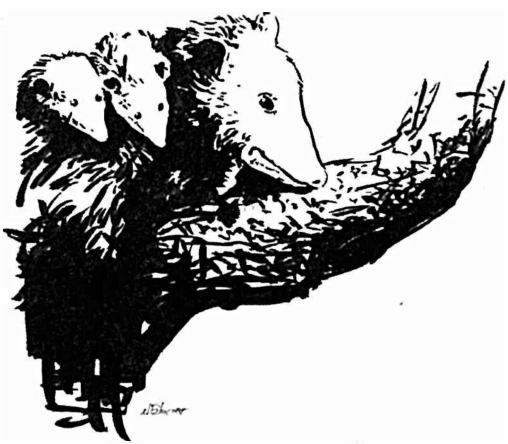
17 M. P. [Manuel Payno], *El Puerto de Matamoros en 1844*, (México: Biblioteca de Historiadores Mexicanos, Editor Vargas Rea, 1951), pp. 20–22.

18 Guillermo Prieto, *Gran romance de los primeros traquidos de la guerra del yanqui*.

19 Guillermo Prieto, *Gran romance de los primeros traquidos de la guerra del yanqui*.

20 Guillermo Prieto, *Gran romance de los primeros traquidos de la guerra del yanqui*.

NINETEENTH CENTURY BIOGRAPHY



The Dead Man's Bride (La Novia del Muerto)

Gathered by Peter Gawenda in June 1985 from a beachcomber on the Bagdad beach; in February 1989 from a nurse at TSC Library; and in October 1991 from an elderly couple at Luby's Cafeteria in Brownsville

It was late 1866 when a band of Mexican revolutionaries encountered a small unit of *Federalistas* to the northwest of Matamoros. The fighting was brief and brutal, and all the *Federalistas* were killed. Fearing reprisals, the revolutionaries fled towards Monterrey. The dead soldiers were buried together in one grave in the graveyard of Matamoros. The bodies of the two officers were taken to the church, where a certain Padre José conducted a mass. Then the officers were buried next to their men in the graveyard. The

revolutionaries had robbed the bodies of all weapons, valuables, and identifications, so no names could be placed on the graves.

A few weeks later, a foreign lady arrived and asked the Padre to show her the graves. She was very beautiful and obviously of noble blood, and must have followed her now-dead groom. She rented a house on the outskirts of the town, where she set up a household with a black servant. Everyday she would attend mass and then go to the grave praying and weeping. But whenever she left the graveyard she seemed to radiate an internal peace. Her neighbors referred to her as the dead man's bride, and she is said to have survived her fiancé by only ten months, her faithful black servant remaining with her. According to one of the sources, a few days after her death a gentleman arrived in mourning attire, stricken with grief. He had a local doctor embalm the beautiful young lady, and took her body with him onto the boat that had brought him to Matamoros.

The graves of the soldiers and officers are no longer known, but it is said that for many years and sometimes even now on All Souls Day a beautiful lady dressed in black is seen standing in the old graveyard. But whenever somebody tries to approach her she seems to suddenly disappear. In 1991, a couple described the lady as wearing typical late-nineteenth-century, very expensive French clothing. They insisted that they could smell a strange, sweet perfume when the lady walked by. The couple thought that the grave must have been where the lady had stopped before she disappeared. During a visit at the graveyard in 1989, some older people who lived close by told of strange apparitions of soldiers in old uniforms and of a lady in black. Some of the people acted as if it were normal to see spirits wander between the graves at night.

Emmanuel Domenech in the Rio Grande Valley, 1851-1853

by

Santiago Escobedo

Emmanuel Henri-Dieudonné Domenech, a French Catholic priest, was a gifted and literate missionary who ministered on the South Texas frontier. His travels brought him to the Rio Grande Valley between 1851 through 1853. Domenech detailed his American experiences in a book entitled *Missionary Adventure in Texas and Mexico: A Personal Narrative of Six Years' Sojourn in those Regions*. The book was written in French, translated into English, and published in London, England, in 1858. The following article is an examination of some of Domenech's South Texas experiences found within this historical document. As a European with a strong sense of chivalry and fairness, he did not hesitate to record what he perceived as wrongful acts. Romantic tales about the Spanish *conquistadores*, the founding of Texas, and Native American tribes are woven throughout *Missionary Adventures*.

Emmanuel Domenech documented South Texas' most exciting historical and turbulent period, the decade before the American Civil War.[1] His historic descriptions are in stark contrast to the popular and heroic conception of American settlers united together against common enemies such as marauding Native Americans and Mexican bandits.[2] In South Texas, his criticism of Anglo-Americans included the American justice system, which favored Anglo pioneers. He recorded unflattering observations of American violence against *Tejano* settlers and Mexican American citizens. He wrote of violent filibusters and the dreams of conquering Northern Mexico. Indeed, Domenech's criticism of Texas' pioneer society caused his writings to be ignored by other historians. Domenech's frontier narrative should have been

welcomed by historians. Instead, his book has been ignored and even belittled.[3]

Domenech observed the seeds of the philosophical mandate, Manifest Destiny, bloom into a violent exploitation of indigenous cultures.[4] Very few other history books written by the turn of the nineteen-century writers criticized or recorded any acts of murder, madness, or deadly quarrels among Anglo pioneers. John Holland Jenkins, who wrote a memoir of his experiences on the frontier, made no reference to a "single white man killing" another white man.[5] Jenkins' book, along with other books similar in theme, present a picture of a united band of frontiersmen and women struggling against the terrors of the wild frontier. Used for generations in Texas public schools, these history books were filled with combat and the atrocities committed by Native Americans and Mexicans against Anglo settlers. These textbooks served to divide the state's population rather than offering an explanation of historical events.[6]

Domenech's observations often expressed disappointment in unfair treatment.[7] The narrative describes the conflict between Anglos, Mexicans, and *Tejanos* for the region's land. Domenech witnessed the participants in the Merchant's War and the businessmen who supported rival warlords for control of the cotton trade. His writings express repulsion at the extreme lawlessness and the harsh lynch justice practiced along the Rio Grande borderlands. He laments over the violence imposed on the Mexican Americans and the *Tejano ranchero* communities as their lands and rights were taken away by American laws.[8]

South Texas, American Frontier–Mexican *Frontera*, 1851-1853

After having spent an initial stint in Texas at Castroville and having returned for a period of rest and recuperation in France, Abbé Domenech came for a second time to the United States in May of 1851. Bishop Odin persuaded him this time to minister among the Catholic population living along the Rio Grande River. In his 1895 autobiography, Domenech claimed that he went to the Rio Grande

frontier to fill the religious void left by the Oblate Fathers, who had recently left Texas and returned to France.[9] Domenech was disappointed that he was not returning to Castroville and fearful about being alone on an isolated frontier. The Church hierarchy during the Spanish colonial period recognized the danger, and missionaries were normally paired before they were allowed to move into isolated territories. The idea of one man being sent alone to replace a group of priests seemed exaggerated but in fact the history of religious orders in this region does show that the resourceful Domenech was sent alone to Brownsville as the Oblate's replacement.[10] Domenech later wrote, "I did not relish solitude very much; for these countries, more barbarian than civilized, presented dangers and *ennui* which, without the aids of grace, the most iron will could not support."[11]

With Bishop Odin having promised that he would send him a partner as soon as possible, Domenech departed Galveston for the Texas-Mexican frontier in the early summer of 1851. He was assigned responsibility for Brownsville (founded three years before) and the surrounding region for approximately sixty miles.[12] He found that his new neighbors felt sympathy with him for being assigned to what they considered a place of exile. At one point, he was asked what misdeed he had committed that had resulted in his assignment to Brownsville. He explained that the Catholic Church had sent him there to perform the ecclesiastical functions required by the region's under-served Catholic population. Upon hearing his answer, his inquirers asked if his assignment was like that of soldiers who came to isolated outposts such as the Rio Grande frontier to seek advancement in their careers.[13]

The Frenchman found himself living on the edge of two young republics that had just finished fighting a war with one another.[14] Andrés Tijerina has argued that during the Spanish colonial period the region along the Rio Grande had been traditionally viewed as a *frontera*, an impenetrable defensive border designed to shield more populous cities.[15] However, as Domenech noted, to the new American frontiersmen who poured into this region after

1848, the open cattle grasslands were "open to exploitation and settlement."[16] According to David Weber, the historical reason for this onrush of American settlers into a seemingly empty land was due to the failure by the Mexican government to colonize the region.[17] In 1848, South Texas ranch land became vulnerable to American speculators and settlers. Violence erupted over land ownership. Domenech described the danger as random.

While in Castroville, Domenech and his friends were faced with hunger as a constant companion. In contrast, the Abbé mentions only one incident of hunger while he traveled along the borderlands. Nonetheless, he did not enjoy the spicy nature of Mexican cuisine. Seated on one occasion as guest of honor at a wedding, he was given "roast kid, cut up into pieces and floating in a horrid sauce of beef-suet, pepper, and spices. After my first taste I felt my throat was on fire," exclaimed Domenech.[18]

Domenech discovered a different form of Catholicism among the local Mexicans and *Tejanos*, finding that there was "stolid ignorance to remove [and] religious views to be modified."[19] The long absence of priests had moved the Catholic religion into the realm of ancient rituals and folk superstition. Travelling to the bedside of a "woman who was dying of hemorrhage,"[20] he found her being spoon-fed by another woman with her breast milk, as "the women of the ranchos" explained Domenech, "have an implicit faith in the sanatory properties of the milk of a Christian woman."[21]

In 1849, Mrs. Helen Chapman, the wife of an U.S. army officer stationed at Fort Brown next to Brownsville, had written that, "The great danger of the West is no religion,"[22] arguing that this meant that "the hand is of necessity almost [always] resting on the handle of a knife or the holster of a pistol."[23] The religious competition over the souls and minds of settlers on the frontier became a point of contention between various American denominations. The efforts of the American Catholic Church were matched in this spiritual competition by the "English Bible Society, the American Bible Society, the Hindoostan Society,

and Anglo-Indian and German Societies, along with Protestant missionaries."[24] Presbyterian missionary Melinda Rankin, arriving in Brownsville in 1852, soon started a school for girls and began smuggling Spanish Bibles into Mexico.[25] She wrote that it was the duty of American Christians "to elevate the moral condition of a country containing a population of millions of souls under the influence of a religion [Catholic] which in point of absurdity might compare with paganism."[26] Domenech, who received little monetary support from the Church, claimed that such Protestant missionaries were financed by American religious communities outside of Texas by "a great deal [of money]" from their sponsors, while they "give but little" to their congregations.[27]

One Presbyterian minister, according to the 1852 account of Ms. Teresa Viele, "collected an ample subscription from the people for the purpose of building a church" in the town.[28] Instead, the minister built a house "on a lot of his own ground," and moved in his "wife and an dozen or more offspring," and began "making preparation for another collection to build the church."[29] Viele wrote that the people of Brownsville did not contribute, and the promised church "remains unbuilt [sic] to this day."[30] Mrs. Chapman, also a military wife, wrote of the same incident. She, however, did not condemn the minister's actions; rather, she expressed concern as to the cost of the house construction. She explained that, "People do not like to expend much capital in this way, but, with great liberality, they have subscribed for a nice brick house."[31] Although she excused the minister's indiscretion, she was not supportive of the minister's choice to build a house rather than a church, because, she felt, as a young couple, the minister and his wife "could live among the parishioners."[32] Domenech also wrote of the same situation and noted that the Presbyterian minister, "instead of building a chapel, as his parishioners expected, he made himself a very elegant house in which himself and his large family were lodged most comfortably."[33] He added that the minister found himself during the siege of Matamoros "atop the roof of his new dwelling on his

knees hands stretched forth like those of Moses on the Mount, imploring the protection of heaven."[34]

During a Sunday service, according to Domenech, the same minister tried to marry off three daughters of his congregation. He preached "on the subject of marriage, amplifying the text in Genesis, increase and multiply."[35] At the end of his sermon, he offered three thousand dollars "to whoever would espouse them," and after the service "he would receive the names of the candidates."[36] His offer elicited a comment from the back of the congregation when "an Irishman did not wait for the time prescribed by the minister to make his voice heard, but asked him to put his name on the list for two. The meeting burst into laughter," Domenech wrote, "there was no rival found to the ambitious aspirant."[37] In spite of the humorous antidote, a concerned Domenech angrily described the efforts by Anti-Catholic religious groups "to distribute bibles and pamphlets abusive of Catholicism among the Mexican population" living in Texas and Mexico.[38]

Along with the challenges to their religious beliefs, South Texas Hispanics were facing attacks on their human rights. Following the Mexican-American War, *Tejanos* and repatriated Mexican Americans realized that they did not have the same protection under U.S. law enjoyed by the Americans who were moving into South Texas. Articles VII and IX of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo "set forth the terms by which the former Mexican citizens and their property would be incorporated politically into the United States."[39] This treaty was not self-executing, and therefore any ownership of land, especially by *Tejanos*, had to await congressional action for confirmation.[40] The Hidalgo treaty did little to help the Hispanic population become part of the American culture, and the adjudication for their land grants "opened the gates to *Tejano* land loss."[41] Historian Armando Alonzo argued that the "Mexicans were apprehensive about their new status as citizens of a country whose people had twice inflicted war on their homeland."[42] Also, in the period after the Mexican-American War, the communities along the Rio Grande, historian David Montejano argues, were

infested with the "worst elements among the Anglo pioneers."[43] In their books, historians Alonzo and Montejano both cited *Abbé* Domenech, who described the Anglo population along the Rio Grande frontier during the mid-19th century as being "for the most part the very scum of society-bankrupts, escaped criminals, old volunteers."[44] For the Hispanics of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, their homeland changed with the coming of American immigrants, and Domenech recorded the transformation.

Slavery ... A "Hideous Sore."

Adding to the woes of the Hispanic populace, and unknown to Domenech, the state of Texas began an Anti-Mexican campaign, viewing the Mexican *peons* as a threat to American slavery. Historian Paul Taylor noted that as "early as 1848 fugitive peons, like the Negro slaves, sought freedom from oppression and economic opportunity by crossing the Rio Grande."[45] As a result, the Hispanic population was viewed as an enemy to slavery by the majority of the Anglo American settlers. Frederick Law Olmsted, during his journey through antebellum Texas, described the relationship between Hispanic and Anglo as hostile. Olmsted pointed out that Mexicans and Mexican Americans were viewed as "heathen, not acknowledged as white folks" by Americans, and, because of that prejudice, Mexicans were "treated insolently and unjustly. They [Hispanics] fear and hate the ascendant race, and involuntarily sympathize with the Negroes."[46] All Hispanics in Texas were considered suspect due to their alleged sympathetic feelings toward slaves, and, as a result, "whole native [Hispanic] populations of county after county has [sic] been driven out."[47] Unfamiliar to the Anglo attitude toward slavery, Mexicans were hospitable to individual slaves, a mistake for which a Mexican woman, who married a slave holder, was whipped by her husband for "feeding the slaves more than he wanted to give them."[48]

Missionary Travels contains descriptions of slaves' lives in Texas and along the Mississippi River in Louisiana. Domenech viewed slavery as a stain on America's greatness as a nation, but in his

book he neither condemned nor sanctioned this institution. As a Frenchman, he called Afro-American slavery a "hideous sore that consumes them [Americans]," yet other than write of his displeasure, he was not an active abolitionist.[49] He may have seen slavery as a phase in the creation of American society, which, if removed, would have been detrimental to its progress. In 1848, he wrote that he believed "the number of black slaves who work in the plantations is very considerable" in Texas.[50]

Historian Randolph Campbell wrote that slaves on plantations lived in "barely adequate housing" and "typically received clothes twice a year."[51] Some owners allowed their bondsmen free time, beginning on Saturday afternoon and continuing all day Sunday. Others would allow only Sunday as free time, but "nevertheless, long hours of hard and monotonous work were the rule." [52] Domenech's writings confirm Campbell's account about the one day of freedom from work for slaves, because, while in Galveston, he witnessed a scene that was also recorded by Colonel Freemantle. However, Freemantle wrote of an underlying motivation for the slave's day off. He claimed that "a rather strict moral code as well as good business sense required that wealthy mercantile families restrict the display of their wealth for fear of offending their less fortunate customers. The only way they could publicly display their love for fancy clothes was through their slaves, whom they dressed outlandishly for regular Sunday afternoon outings."[53] The dancing and promenading in nice clothes are very human traits expressed by people who felt they were free, if only for one day. Colonel Freemantle also observed during his stay in Galveston that the slave owners "sometimes loaned the Negroes their carriages and riding horses."[54]

While in Galveston, Domenech described a horse race. "I observed the master give full liberty to Negroes on Sunday. One day in seven is not much, still in a Southern State it is a great deal."[55] "Often," he noted, "they yoke their masters' horses to cars and gallop along the beach, making the air resound with their songs and shouts of revelry, not waiting until the decline of the day has somewhat

mitigated the heat of the sun."[56] The slaves "accordingly indulge in their two favorite amusements of promenading and dancing."[57] This Galveston scene recorded by white witnesses provided a small insight into a slave's life of unknown terror and racial hatred. Domenech's description of joyful songs and shouts are in stark contrast to the harsh reality of slave life. The French clergy wrote that on this day of freedom, "the poor Negroes endeavor to compensate for the six days of toil and servitude."[58]

Domenech, as a man without prejudice, saw the humanity in all of the people he met. While in Castroville, he left Texas on a fund-raising trip to Louisiana, where he was awe-struck as he observed Afro-Americans engaged in collective backbreaking work along the riverbanks of the Mississippi River. The repair of breaks in the levee, which opened along the course of the river, was the task of slaves. Similar to a scene from *"Dante's Inferno,"* Domenech described the dangerous work of the slaves as they saved their owners' sugar plantations from flooding. "Thousands of Negroes," the clergyman wrote "were at work up to the waist in mud, striving to stop up the *crevasse* with *facines*, branches of trees, and a kind of hemp, made of a parasite plant called *barbe de Espagnol* [Spanish moss], which hangs pendant from the trees in long tendrils."[59]

As he traveled along the Mississippi River, Domenech also celebrated Sunday Mass at a backwoods cabin where he baptized "a great number of young Negroes."[60] Domenech, by baptizing young black men, put himself in danger because, in the South, fraternization of whites with black was viewed suspiciously due to a slave owner's fear of abolitionists and their influence on their slaves.[61] Domenech not does mention as to whether he was aware of the dangers for breaking slave laws. His writings, however, reveal a genuine concern for the salvation of men's souls.

Brownsville ... "An American Town."

Back in Texas and along the north bank of the lower Rio Grande River, Domenech found the majority of the American population clustered around the city of Brownsville. Brownsville was crowded

with transients and immigrants from both America and Europe, either seeking homesteads or on their way overland to the California gold fields.[62] Although Texas had completed a successful rebellion against Mexico in 1836 and obtained American statehood in 1845, Americans remained hesitant about migrating to South Texas due to the insufficient U.S. military protection along the Mexican border. But, with the 1848 American victory over Mexico, the fear of military invasions by Mexico disappeared, and immigrants poured into Brownsville and South Texas.

Brownsville was an American town, created in 1848 by the Yankee merchant Charles Stillman. The town, founded directly across the river from the Mexican town of Matamoros, was brash, young, and full of political and economic intrigue. Many of Brownsville's neighboring Mexican towns were older, having been created during the Spanish Colonial period. There were also other new towns, Nuevo Laredo for example, established by the repatriation program following the Mexican-American War.[63] Unlike such Mexican towns south of the river as Mier, Camargo, and Reynosa, Brownsville was created virtually overnight. The first people to populate the town were "mostly merchants of American and French ancestry, along with Mexican families."[64] But, as city historian Henry N. Ferguson wrote, soon "escaped criminal, deserters from both armies of the recent war, gamblers, swindlers and misfits from every strata of society found their way to Brownsville."[65]

Brownsville's population had increased to five or six thousand residents by Domenech's arrival in 1851. Historian Henry N. Ferguson wrote that the town consisted of "quite a number of people living in the area in a hodgepodge of scattered huts and jacales. Many were squatters who built houses and stores wherever fancy dictated."[66] Because of Brownsville's haphazard establishment, "most of the motley collection of buildings were not within property lines, [so] the influential men of the community called upon the sheriff to get the situation straightened out."[67] The sheriff, a Guatemalan named Santiago Brito, had earned a

considerable reputation as a lawman,"[68] Given the authority to align the town, Sheriff Brito "decreed that every building in the city must be on private property within eight days. For eight days, traffic jams filled the streets as people frantically bought property and moved their buildings. Most of them made the deadline; those who didn't had to stand by and watch the sheriff's men level their buildings to the ground."[69] The decree was enforced, and Brownsville was properly, if brutally, established.

Prior to the Mexican-American War, a large number of Americans had lived in Matamoros, Mexico. American commercial interests in the region had a long history. Historian Leroy Graf wrote that, "before the Texas Revolution, Americans substantially outnumbered other foreigners in Matamoros."[70] Many of these men were merchant-speculators who anticipated the American possession of all the land north of the Rio Grande River, including the port of Brazos Santiago. With the end of the war and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe, these merchants "began purchasing tracts of land from Mexican owners."[71] Both Brownsville and Matamoros swelled with the influx of people.[72] Far from Mexico City and Washington, these towns were seen as dream ports and fortune makers for those merchants who made their wealth importing and exporting goods from and into Northeastern Mexico.[73]

Unlike the West Texas frontier, in South Texas Spanish and Mexican land grants left no unclaimed land. As a result, the landless Anglo population clustered around Brownsville and the U.S. Army's Fort Brown. American courts adjudicated litigation over land and settled questions of the ownership and validity of land grants. *Tejano* landowners found themselves in the position of having to prove their title to their own homes and land. The Spanish and Mexican land grants were the subject of court and state legislature actions. Because of these new American laws, *Tejano* landowners found themselves defending their titles. Property ownership prior to the Mexican-American War was communal among *Tejano* family members. As Leroy Graf explained, "An estate bequeathed to more than one heir became the joint property of the

several heirs without designation of individual location. All the owners grazed their stock on the land."[74] As land ownership was passed on through the generations, and, as families expanded, "the fractional interests become numerous, [and] ownership became confused."[75] Questions and conflicts arose over the validity and criteria of ancient Spanish grants and Mexican titles. The United States boundary commission confirmed a total of "194 claims in the names of the original Spanish and Mexican grantees."[76] In Tamaulipas and Coahuila alone, there were approximately 350 cases heard by the commission.[77] Through time, about one third of the *Tejano* landowners "south of the Nueces River lost their patents."[78] In addition, many original land titles presented by *Tejano* landowners to the Bourland and Miller Commission in 1852 were aboard the steamship *Anon* when it sank in the Gulf of Mexico, and these valuable titles were forever lost.[79]

The confirmation of titles for *Tejano* landholders allowed for new land transactions, but at the same time targeted them for "lawsuits among parties claiming title to the same land."[80] Domenech wrote that land claims were the "prolific source of quarrels and litigation"[81] in this region. He described the often-violent nature of the contested land claims along the lower Rio Grande. The isolation of the Rio Grande allowed squatters to move onto lands that were seemly unclaimed.[82] There were few Texas land grants sold to American speculators south of the Nueces River by the government of the Texas Republic, as legislatures were aware of Spanish family claims to the area.

In South Texas, Domenech explained, "the simplest and shortest method" for individuals who wanted to claim property was "to select one (plot of land) at will near some river or water-course, and then to install yourself without further formality."[83] He claimed that many property owners "who have established themselves in Texas, are proprietors by no other right."[84] If there was a question over the squatter's right to piece of land, the *Abbé* pointed out, "the pistol, the carbine, and the bowie-knife establish the right."[85] Domenech reported that the American annexation

also attracted a number of forged Mexican and Spanish land grants, along with holders of legitimate government land grants.[86] He wrote that following the Mexican War more land grants were given to returning veterans.[87] The American justice system was overwhelmed by litigation and the settling of lawsuits was left to the discretion of local judges, who, Domenech charged, were open to corruption.[88]

According to the *Abbé*, judges decided according to the individuals who appeared before their court rather than by the letter of the law. From Domenech's description, those persons who were friends of the judge received preferential judgments in their favor. Domenech also added that the judges were often drunk, and "when to drunkenness is added ignorance of the law, then it is only a Mexican, a simpleton, or a coward that would appeal to law for justice."[89] Because in a lawless frontier, claimed the *Abbé*, "Americans, and the Europeans, who know how things stand in these still savage regions, dispense with magistrates; and the dispensers of justice never interfere in the disputes of such people."[90] From the French *Abbé*'s description it would appear American law held little influence outside of Brownsville. Domenech compared Brownsville to "the great towns of the Union" where there were police but added that, unlike those towns, "[in] the frontiers of the new states the law has little sway."[91]

Nineteenth-century Texians viewed the Mexican border with the same regard as they did the pirate refuge at Galveston Island or the Neutral Strip in northeast Texas, both regions that served as havens for outlaws and filibusters during the early nineteen century. The lawlessness of the Rio Grande frontier became well known throughout Texas after it gained independence. On April 29, 1844, Texas traveler William Bollaert described meeting a criminal on the trail. He wrote that a man known as "Wilson the Jew who got 39 lashes in Houston passed us today. He says he is going to Matamoros—thus the Mexican frontier is a place of refuge for our criminals."[92] Domenech's description of Brownsville's violence concurred with Bollaert's assessment of the lawless nature found

on the border frontier. Early Brownsville court records, according to city historian Henry Ferguson, portrayed "the apathy of weak citizens and the inability of the few who were law abiding to cope with the situation".[93] The Brownsville court records from this period also "indicate that few felony cases were brought to trial."[94] In his book, however, Ferguson failed to mention the instant justice known as lynch law that was applied to criminals when caught by the citizens of Brownsville.

Domenech was dismayed to find that the lynch law was in full force in Brownsville, but he also wrote that circumstances along the border sometimes justified its practice. "What shocks our reason and sentiments," he wrote about a practice he generally condemned, "seems sometimes in the solitudes of the New World, not only natural but indispensable."[95] He witnessed several hangings, and would recite a short prayer with the condemned. But during one hanging, Domenech, knowing the lengthy discourse was an added torment to the condemned men, could not comprehend the Presbyterian minister's long-winded sermon as the fugitives, rope around their neck, waited to be dispatched into eternity.[96]

In 1853, Helen Chapman expressed her opinion on the lack of equality in the adjudication of American laws. The laws that were supposed to protect all Americans were not applicable to the "Texan Mexican," wrote Chapman.[97] "It is a very common idea in Texas that it is not wrong to kill a Mexican" noted this unusually compassionate writer.[98] "I have often heard it said," she wrote, repeating the sentiments of her fellow Anglo settlers, that "it would be impossible to find a jury who would convict an American for such a crime."[99] In Brownsville Mexicans and Mexican-Americans paid dearly when they either acted as participants in criminal activity or were victims of a crime

The clergyman wrote that the harsh justice system in South Texas was based on the "shameless partiality of the American judges," and, for this reason, when the law was applied to non-Anglo

defendants such as "Germans, Irish and Mexicans, the law was enforced with all its rigour."[100] Historian Arnoldo de Leon also wrote about the instant application of lynch law justice toward Hispanics in South Texas, and how an "astonishing number of Mexicans in the nineteenth century fell victim at the hands of whites who regarded the killing of Mexicans as inconsequential"[101] The Frenchman also noted that lawbreaking Anglo-Americans were often "let off scot-free" by these judges or were sentenced to pay a fine, a fine which often went unpaid.[102] A New Orleans newspaper in 1852 condemning lynching reported that "one American and nine Mexicans were executed" by the rope in Brownsville.[103] From both the newspaper report and Domenech's description it would appear the lynch law was applied with full force against Mexican criminals, whereas Anglo criminals such as Elisha Throughman, a horse thief, were often sentenced to exile.[104] A public notice in the newspaper, *American Flag*, placed by the Commissioners Court in 1854, warned the citizens against Throughman who was at one time a deputy sheriff of Hidalgo County.[105]

As Domenech traveled among the region's Mexicans and *Tejano*s he observed continual racial discrimination towards them by Anglo-Americans. He found along the river frontier the American laws were merciless against Mexicans. On the frontier, racial prejudice unified the Anglo community, but it was the American law and judicial system that strengthen its territorial claims to the region. The legal system also discouraged the non-Anglo populations from participating in the political process.[106] Historian Reginald Horsman addressed the treatment directed toward non-Anglo immigrants, and argued that "American politicians devised policies that would allow none but the American—Anglo-Saxon—population to participate in the American republic."[107] But the *Tejano*s and Mexican Americans were not the only ones on the frontier to be targets for abuse by Anglo-Americans during the antebellum period.[108]

In *Missionary Adventures,* Domenech presented an unflattering example of political intimation in Brownsville. The French priest

observed an incident in which an armed Anglo majority stifled the freedom of speech and political thought. "In America, as you are free in the choice of a profession, so are you in the expression of political opinion" he sarcastically wrote.[109] Domenech went on to explain that after the invasion of Cuba on August 1851 by four hundred men under General Narciso López, Brownsville witnessed "demonstrations, and pushed on enlistments" in support of López's attack. The *Abbé* described Brownsville's patriotic atmosphere and the many public discussions about the undertaking, but he noted that during these meeting "all Americans were invited to pronounce on" López's intention to establish Cuban independence and annexation as an American state.[110] The *Abbé* remarked that there were some citizens who, "moderate and upright in their views, endeavored to speak against the illegality of this usurpation," but that, as soon as they offered opposing comments, "a score of pistols were aimed at their heads, to keep their tongues more quiet." On the frontier where social opinions were strong, the cocking of twenty pistol hammers would silence the most determined critic.

The *Abbé*'s description shows that dissenters were kept quiet with armed threats and that their silence was taken for confirmation of the majority view. However, the observant priest did not hesitate to mention the fact that among the population there were patriotic people who believed in constitutional freedoms, and, "seeing the work of [President] Washington falling to pieces, have paid for their upright patriotism." A disappointed Domenech wrote that these citizens received for their speaking out against oppressive actions "persecutions, blows, [and] fire" as their reward.[111]

Unlike Alexis de Tocqueville, who twenty years earlier praised the great American democratic experiment, Domenech questioned the existence of democracy on America's frontiers.[112] He criticized European writers who praised the democratic nature of the United States, yet never visited or lived in the country. If it [democracy] exists," he concluded, "it is not the fault of the Americans, for they do their best to become aristocrats themselves."[113]

On the frontier, *Tejano*s and Mexican immigrants were kept silent by strong-arm tactics under the guise of American justice. The people of South Texas were often born in isolation and unaware of events beyond their ranches, and they had difficulty comprehending the new American system of government. The exclusion of the Hispanic population from American democracy was reminiscent of the behavior by American officers observed by Domenech directed toward Irish soldiers. He wrote that because of Protestant officers and their prejudice toward Irish soldiers, the words "liberty, equality and fraternity of the United States" when spoken to these men "are hollow phrases."[114]

Abbé Domenech noted that discrimination and harsh treatment by Anglo-Americans was directed to others beside Mexicans or Mexican Americans. On a journey to a military camp, he observed Irish soldiers subjected to cruel treatment by their officers. "The United States government supports at Rio Grande City two or three companies of the regular army" he wrote, "whose quarters are to the south of the city."[115] Unprepared for what awaited him; he angrily left shortly after his arrival at the post. He explained his sudden departure. "I had letters of introduction to the Commandant of the fort and the doctor, and presented them at their address; but being an eyewitness of the barbarous treatment that the Irish Catholic soldiers are now subjected to, I left with disgust, and never again set foot in the garrison. I saw an Irishman dying in chains in his bed!"[116] The Frenchman, as an experienced frontiersman, recognized the signs of death, and was disgusted with the American military's inhumane treatment of Irish soldiers by their officers. The fact that a man was chained to his bed rather than made comfortable as he was dying was too much for Domenech.

The Merchant's War ... "Economic Interest, Law and Order."

Examples of cooperation between ethnic and racial groups included cases where men from both sides of the border joined in business ventures. The business opportunities offered by the trade

in Mexican and American goods attracted a diverse population of day laborers, farmers, and ranchers into Brownsville. The business community included military contractors, who hired teamsters to haul equipment and ordinance to military forts built along the Rio Grande. The river commerce was good for the region, and advanced the peaceful economic interests of both Mexican and American merchants. The stabilization of law and order in Brownsville depended on merchants and profits.[117]

The conduct of business did not escape comment from Domenech. He was "struck with the animation of Brownsville due to a number of frontier farmers" arriving daily to purchase provisions.[118] However, shortly after his arrival, business on both sides of the border was interrupted. The clergyman wrote about the actions of rebel filibusters led by a *Tejano* general who, in turn, was supported by American and Mexican merchants and their efforts to eliminate Mexican taxes and gain control of the cotton trade.

In Brownsville of the early 1850's, a lucrative trade in "unbleached cotton stuff or *manta*" existed, the *Abbé* explained.[119] The cotton material was used in large quantities by *rancheros* "for inner and light garments and for manual purposes" and, according to his explanation, fifty English and Spanish merchants in Monterrey, Mexico, enjoyed a Mexican cotton monopoly.[120] In order to protect these Mexican manufacturers, high taxes were imposed to prevent the importation of American fabrics and cotton.[121] The customhouse in Matamoros regulated the import of cotton, and its officials patrolled river crossings to prevent smuggling from Texas. Nonetheless, Texas cotton was brought on ships into and up the Rio Grande, where it was unloaded and smuggled into Mexico.[122] Domenech claimed that cotton smuggling "assumed colossal proportions along the line of the Rio Grande."[123] Business was so profitable that Brownsville and Matamoros merchants decided to pursue an old dream of an independent state. They would create their own republic and, with their own nation, eliminate the high Mexican taxes, circumvent the Monterrey cotton monopoly,

and control the merchandise passing through the only port for northeast Mexico, Brazos Santiago.[124]

The merchants of Matamoros and Brownsville conspired to sponsor a rebellion, wrote *Abbé* Domenech.[125] The Merchant's War, as this episode of Texas history became known, was to concentrate the cotton trade in the hands of Brownsville merchants.[126] The premise of the rebellion, according to the *Abbé*, was the establishment of a "new phase of government" in which "taxes and the custom-houses were alike to be abolished, and a free trade to be established with the United States."[127] The merchants recruited General José María Jesús Carbajal, who during the Mexican-American War promoted the founding of the Republic of the Sierra Madre, a republic comprised of the northern Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon and Coahuila.[128] Domenech claimed Carbajal was working at the behest of the merchants and "promised twenty-five *piatres* a month to every recruit."[129] However, the Mexican government was "convinced the United States was saying a great deal about preventing invasions like Carajal's [sic], but doing nothing to stop them."[130] In opposition to Carbajal's mixed army of Americans and Mexicans was General Francisco Avalos commander of the Mexican forces in the region.[131]

Shortly after the start of the rebellion, General Avalos was invited (by the same merchants who earlier had recruited Carbajal) to Matamoros, where, after some wining and dining, the cordial general was presented with the fact that his force could not defend the town. The town's merchants made an offer the general could not refuse: if he lowered the cotton tariffs, the money left over would provide sufficient funding for the suppression of the uprising. General Avalos agreed to the offer, and the satisfied merchants withdrew their support from Carbajal.[132]

The fighting came to an end when General José María Canales ambushed Carbajal as he tried to cross back to Mexico.[133] The final battle resulted in Carbajal retreating to the American side, and many of his men, including American filibusters, being

executed.[134] *Abbé* Domenech ministered to the captured American prisoners, comforting them and pleading for their release from the Mexican commander, Avalos. Domenech collected a petition to send to General Arista, the President of the Mexican Republic, pleading for the release of the American prisoners of war. All his efforts failed, and the exhausted priest was left praying at their execution. He wrote that the executions "had preyed more on me than a year of missionary labour."[135] The final outcome of the rebellion was the death of several filibusters and of many more Mexican citizens.[136]

Rio Grande Settlements and *Rancheros*

Living conditions along the Rio Grande River did not improve after the Merchant's War. The borderland frontier lacked the essentials of a civilized society, such as laws, communication, and, most important, roads.[137] *Abbé* Domenech found that travel along the border consisted of steamboat and riding horseback. On a trip to the town of Alamo, Texas, he sailed up the river, and then had to ride the remaining distance by horseback. "I had to travel more in Mexico than Texas, for this part of the Texian frontier is quite destitute of roads," wrote the *Abbé*.[138] The determined priest followed the old Spanish trails in Mexico between towns and, when he got close to a newly founded American town, he would cross the river from Mexico to reach it.

As part of his Brownsville mission, Domenech made several visits to the outlying town of Roma, where, he stated, ten Jewish merchants wanted him to stay, and where he built a church.[139] The *Abbé* also traveled to the towns of Mier, Rio Grande City, Reynosa, Camargo, and Edinburg, as well as to numerous *ranchos* and nameless settlements. On one such trip, the clergyman left the road, and got lost. As he struggled to find his way through the thicket, he was confronted with a hunting party of nine Native Americans, whom he labelled *Manzos*.[140] One of the bands approached the startled priest asking for tobacco. Scared, and remembering how his old friend Father Dubuis had escaped his

Comanche captors, Domenech announced loudly that he was the "chief of prayer on the banks of the great waters. I have come into the interior to visit the worshipers of the Great Spirit, and I return to my cabin"[141] The *Manzos* were taken aback by his answer and questioned, "Why does not the chief of prayer follow the great road quite near him? The way of the long grass is not easy." Determined not to let the group know that he was lost, the quick thinking Frenchman explained how the Great Spirit cools the tall grass and prevents the traveler from being struck by lightning. Needless to say, once the amused band left, Domenech headed for the road pointed out by the *Manzos*.

In his new assignment, Domenech compared the differences between the western and southern frontiers of antebellum Texas, explaining, "In my first mission [Castroville] I had to encounter avarice, roguery, and drunkenness. In the second, [Brownsville] I stood single-handed against ignorance, superstition, indifference and immorality."[142] In South Texas, Domenech found the *Tejano*s and Mexican Americans, most of whom had involuntarily become citizens of the United States in 1845, different from the European immigrants in the Hill Country. In the Hill County, the novice European pioneers were vulnerable to frontier dangers. However, in South Texas, the land-owning *Tejano vaqueros*, descendants of Spanish colonizers, had a long history of independence and individualism created and tempered by years of isolation in a remote and violent frontier region. In addition to the *Tejanos*, there were the Mexican Americans (Mexicans who were born within the Texas boundary and had accepted American citizenship). Along with these two groups, there were Mexican immigrants fleeing an oppressive peonage-based society and willing to negotiate for work north of the Rio Grande River.

Abbé Domenech found that Mexicans, Mexican Americans and *Tejano*s formed the majority of the population of South Texas. The good father was welcomed by the *rancheros* of the region. In some settlements, people told him they had not seen a priest in sixty years.[143] By the end of his stay, *Abbé* Domenech would

become friends and a *compadre* with many members from the Hispanic population.[144] Although frustrated by their apathy, Domenech admired their simple life and their adaptation to a hostile environment. His realistic descriptions of the Hispanic population and their *ranchero* culture are insightful of a solitary and independent existence. His writing revealed an individualistic ranching lifestyle and a Hispanic population unprepared to be confronted with Anglo repression.

As a child of the French revolution, *Abbé* Domenech could not disguise his disappointment with the Mexican tolerance toward the injustices directed at them.[145] "On both banks of the Rio Grande, the Mexicans who do not live in towns or sell merchandise are *rancheros*. *Rancho,* which means farm, is often taken for a number of farms or a village" he explained about these ranch settlements. In northern Mexico or southern Texas, the *ranchos* were founded during the Colonial period and "served to defend the northern Spanish *frontera*, despite their remoteness and limited manpower."[146] The *Abbé* wrote that the "country people [*rancheros*] are just as indolent as their countrymen of town. They have all the characteristics and all the defects of an infant people."[147]

The *rancheros* of the Rio Grande, to status-minded Europeans like Domenech, were lazy. "I could never know how a ranchero lived, for he labours little or none; the very shadow of labour overpowers him," wrote the puzzled Domenech. "His horse, of which he is very proud, is his inseparable companion. He is content with a wretched hut for his residence, while he decorates his saddle and bridle with gold and silver ornaments."[148] He described the *ranchero* as "all filth, but mounted on his horse he wears the gayest attire."[149]

In reality, the *ranchero* livestock-dependent lifestyle was self sufficient and often misunderstood, due to the fact that most work was done on the range rather than close to the habitats. The *rancheros* were capable of living from the products of their labors such as sheep, goat, mules, horses, and cattle. But the

industrious *Abbé*, a citizen of a capitalistic European society, did not understand a ranching culture where the need for materialistic goods was lacking after years of isolation and self-dependence. Nor did he observe the annual round up or cattle drives, sheep shearing, and numerous other cyclical tasks of ranch maintenance. His assessment of the *rancheros* was based on physical appearance, and overlooked the hardships and rewards of surviving in an unforgiving environment.

Initially critical of the Hispanic population, the *Abbé* slowly became "aware of how gentle, gracious, and open to persuasion" they were.[150] As *Abbé* Domenech befriended the descendants of Spanish Colonial ranching tradition, he also pondered the cultural trait of what he viewed as "the Mexican's submission." Domenech explained that the Hispanic population participated in their own submission by "supporting, the cruelty and contempt of a nation [U.S.] which sovereignty detested [them]," adding that he had been "often the witness of his incredible nonchalance and imperturbable meekness."[151] Domenech watched as Mexicans and *Tejanos* restrained their anger toward their new American neighbors, commenting that "in these badly-organized regions, the Mexican might have an easy vengeance on his persecutors."[152] He stated that the Americans "who are quite the minority on the Texian frontiers" were surrounded by the Mexicans, "but vengeance is not in [the Mexican's] heart." Domenech noted that "he would forget an injury [rather] than take the trouble of avenging it."[153]

His travel on horseback, his concern over the fate of the weak and poor, and the lack of financial support from the Catholic Church took a physical and mental toll on *Abbé* Domenech. He left Brownsville for France in September 1853, but he vowed to return to establish churches in Southern Texas and Northern Mexico, for which he lobbied. However, he would not fulfil his vow. In 1860, he accompanied the French army into central Mexico as an army chaplain and the personal secretary to Emperor Maximillian.[154]

Conclusion

The Mexican-American War created a reading taste in the United States for frontier adventure. Unfortunately, it was not always possible to record the frontier experiences. Magazine journalists often visited the frontier for short periods of time, and then returned home to write of their travels. These writers, like present-day war correspondences, seldom lived among the populace. Their written descriptions promoted the Anglo pioneer struggle to tame the savage frontier. Modern historians have often cited these narratives as descriptive evidence of the heroic deeds by American settlers on the desolate Texas frontier.[155] In Europe as in America there was an insatiable appetite for stories of the American frontier. Domenech's book, *Missionary Adventures* met with such success that two years later he published his second book, *Seven Years' Residence in the Great Deserts of North America.* This second book contains a wealth of anthropological and historical information about the last tribes living on the American mid-West. The book was a product of his journal, which was written while he was a student at St. Louis, Missouri.

Although *Missionary Adventures* provides insight into the daily lives of the Texas frontier, it is ignored by modern historians because of Domenech's criticism of pioneer society.[156] Also, because the book was written by a European who did not acknowledge the American struggle to tame a continent, it remained a curiosity rather than a serious historical document. "Americans" wrote the French *Abbé* "must have a clear stage for themselves, but to others they would not extend the smallest latitude."[157] His negative comments about American pioneer society were based on his observation of Anglo behavior toward non-Anglos. The *Abbé* wrote of those forgotten, ignored persons who survived a historic period dictated by the philosophy of Manifest Destiny.

Domenech criticized all cultural and social groups on the frontier; his criticism did not spare any one group, not even the Catholic Church. One example of his outspoken criticism included the

sacred cow of Texas history (other than the heroes of the Alamo), the Texas Rangers. The Rangers were formed when yeoman farmers banded together as a militia against common enemies. However with the passing of the immediate danger these farmers would disband and return to their homes. As beneficial as these brave men were to the protection of their farms and families, they were also rootless individuals who used the law to gain and protect themselves from prosecution.

Domenech did not hesitate to write his comments about their reign of terror over the Hispanic population in San Antonio, Texas. He blamed the Rangers for many of the Mexican homicides in the town. "The greater part of the murders," wrote Domenech "were committed by the Ranger volunteers of the American army who were disbanded after the treaty of Guadaloupe [sic] Hidalgo. They are the very dregs of society, and [the most] degraded of human creatures."[158] Although there are countless stories in Texas history of the Texas Rangers and their deeds, there are few stories about their abuse of power.

Missionary Adventures conveys the common dangers on the frontier as people faced tasks such as crossing rivers without the benefit of a bridge, traveling without the aid of well-marked roads, or hunting for food. The daily fear experienced among settlers must have raised personal stress to the highest levels known. The term traumatic syndrome was unheard of in the mid nineteen century, but the inexplicably violent behavior witnessed by Father Domenech revealed that this malady was a common affliction. Combatants, for example, have often described warfare as prolonged boredom punctuated with moments of extreme terror. On the frontier, these conditions were reversed, for the settler lived a life of continual fear interrupted with short periods of peace. Many of the settlers died far from their homelands, forgotten by family and friends.

In 1899, a fellow countryman and Catholic historian, Father Pierre Fourrier Parisot (1827-1903), wrote his own memoirs about his missionary experiences in Texas. Father Parisot

critiques Domenech's writing as "extravagant," and described Domenech as the "author of several books, some of which relate to missionary life in Texas and Mexico. They are well written and highly interesting, but they are too romantic to deserve the name of history."[159] Father Parisot's criticism of a fellow pioneer missionary is unusual and may have resulted from Domenech's written complaints of the lack of financial support from the Catholic Church while on the frontier. Today, *The Handbook of Texas Online* criticizes Domenech's work as "exaggerated and repetitious."[160] Yet, Domenech's narrative does enjoy some notoriety. A Houston City web site, *Historic Houston*, quotes his description of their city as "a wretched little town infested with Methodists and ants."[161] In *The Handbook of Texas-Online* can also be found his description of the Texas capital, Austin, as "a small dirty town" with "only one hotel."[162]

However, *Abbé* Domenech possessed uncommon curiosity, and within his writings can be found many details that offer valuable insight into the Lower Rio Grande Valley's frontier community. I wonder, without having met Emmanuel Domenech, whether he was not somewhat like Edmond Rostand's hero, Cyrano de Bergerac, for he, too, was a man of strong convictions and little compromise.

Endnotes

1 Domenech, Emmanuel. *Missionary Adventure in Texas and Mexico: A Personal Narrative of Six Years' Sojourn in Those Regions*. Translated from French and printed by Spottiswoode and C. New Street Square. London: Long man, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts. 1858. The term Anglo-American for this thesis will be used to describe American born white population.

2 For a realistic version of pioneer reactions to Native American raiders, see, *The Captured; A True Story of Abduction by Indians on the Texas Frontier*. Scott Zesch (St. Maritn's Press, New York, 2004), p.11.

3 With the exception of Texas author, Dr. Carlo Castaneda, other Catholic authors, and most recent, *Tejano* historians, none of the early creators of Texas History —Webb, Dobie or Fehrenbach— mentioned or referenced Domenech's book.

4 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 131. *Abbé* Domenech criticized the American failure to assimilate Native Americans "in the neighborhood of great colonising establishments" and he noted that the "attempts at introducing civilisation among the Red Skins are almost always without success" p. 104. However, before the arrival of American settlers there were sedentary tribes who farmed in Texas. These were the "Delaware, Shawnee, Caddoans, Kickapoos, Creeks, Musoges, Biloxies and Seminoles" tribes whose land was taken in 1849, p.105. Lamenting the self-serving ways unscrupulous individuals exploited the misfortunes of Native Americans tribes, he wrote, "North Americans have abused the confidence, good faith, and helplessness of the Indians; they have ill-used and massacred them without pity on different occasions, and the Indians ever seek revenge for these things."

5 Jenkins III, John Holmes. *Recollections of Early Texas, The Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins*. (University of Texas Press,1987), p.xi.

6 The teaching of Texas history in its schools portrayed Native Americans, Europeans, and Mexicans as undesirable, uncivilized, and ignorant populations. The experience of a young *Tejano* was typical of many school-age Hispanics in Texas. "I was the only Mexican (American) in my high school, and well liked by the Americans. I used to go to picnics with them and drink water out of the same cups and pitchers. Then we came to the Alamo in our study of history, and then it was 'gringo' and 'greaser' (both names are used in the original *Texas History Movies* published in 1928 and given free to Texas schools for 30 years). They expelled me from the baseball nine and would not sit with me any more, and, told me to drink out of my own cup. We had been good friends, but it poisoned their hearts against me and was the cause of race hatred." Taylor, Paul S. *An American-Mexican Frontier Nueces County, Texas*. (The University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p. 273.

7 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 226. "I likewise remarked a great number of people drunk, sprawling asleep in the sun before the grog-shops where they get intoxicated. These taverns, called barrooms, are often the theater of scenes that disgrace human nature. On one occasion, an Irishman of a respectable family fell foul of an American merchant naturally of a quarrelsome temper. The friends on both sides decided that recourse to arms could alone make amends for the offence. A duel was at once decided upon, and took place in the very tavern. The Irishman got a pistol not charged, and of course fell. Such is their notion of fair play in America."

8 Mexican Americans for this thesis denotes the 1848 Mexican War created social class and ethnic class created north of the Rio Grande by the U.S. victory in the Mexican American War.

9 Domenech, E. *Les Secrets de Ma Valise: Voyages et Souvenirs*. (General Catholic Library in Lyon, France, 1895.), p. 193.*"A peine arrive', Mgr. Odin m'annonca que je ne retourneris pas a Castroville, parce que les PP. Oblats qui desservaient Brownsville et les missions du Rio Grande etant repartic pour la France, il n'avait que moi pour les remplacer"*. This sentence is from a non-translated autobiography that covers Domenech's life and travels throughout the world.

10 *The Handbook of Texas Online*. s.v. "Keralum, Pierre Yves," http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/KK/fke31.html (accessed January 19, 2005) "The first Oblates had arrived in Texas in late 1849 but were all withdrawn by early 1851."

11 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 215.

12 Domenech traveled northward along the Rio Grande River from Brownsville. A map shows he ventured as far north as Roma, Texas and visited other small towns such as Davis Ranch or Rio Grande City, Edinburgh and a settlement named Galveston, Texas. At Galveston he crossed the Rio Grande River where he followed the road to the Mexican towns of Las Palmas, Reynosa, Camargo, and Mier.

13 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 223.

14 Merk, Frederick, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, (Vintage Books, 1963), p.191. Prior to the Mexican-American War treaty, debates in the United States addressed the question of citizenship of the Mexican population.

15 Tijerina, Andres. *Tejano Empire: Life on the South Texas Ranchos*. (Texas A&M Press), p.xx.

16 Ibid.

17 Weber, David J. *The Mexican Frontier 1821-1846 The American Southwest Under Mexico*, (University of New Mexico, 1982), p. 96.

18 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 279. The *Abbé* mentioned that every home he visited he always presented with a cigarette and a cup of chocolate. He consumed these offerings because refusal would have been a great offense against the host.

19 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 249.

20 Ibid. p. 293.

21 Ibid.

22 Chapman, Helen. T*he News from Brownsville*. Caleb Coker, editor. (Texas State Historical Association,1992), p. 135.

23 Ibid.

24 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 59.

25 Rankin, Melinda. *Texas in 1850*. (Texian Press, 1966). It should be noted that during this period Mexico's official state religion was Catholicism.

26 Ibid, p. 56.

27 Domenech, E. pp. 59-60.

28 Viele, Teresa Griffin. *Following the Drum. A Glimpse of Frontier Life*. (University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 109.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Chapman, Helen. *The News from Brownsville*. Caleb Coker, editor. (Texas State Historic Association, 1992), p.159.

32 Ibid, p. 174. Brevet Major W.W. Chapman, husband of Helen Chapman, the author of the Brownsville letters, came to the Rio Grande in 1847, according to Pat Kelly author of *River of Lost Dreams; Navigation on the Rio Grande*. (University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 84. Kelly claimed the business partnership of Major Chapman and Charles Stillman dictated "the future of the Rio Grande."

33 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, pp. 245-246.

34 Ibid. p. 245.This would have the siege by Carbajal forces during the Merchant's War.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid. p. 246.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid. p. 247.

39 Del Castillo, Richard Griswold. *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, A Legacy of Conflict*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), p. 62.

40 Klein, Christine A. *Federal Legislation and Court Cases*. http://academic.udayton.ed./race/02rights/guadalu6.htm (accessed July 20, 2005).

41 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "MEXICAN-AMERICAN LAND GRANT ADJUDICATION," http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/onle/view/MM/pqmck.html (accessed April 1, 2005).

42 Alonzo, Armando C. *Tejano Legacy Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900*, (University of New Mexico Press, 1998), p.92.

43 Ibid, p.31.

44 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 228. By Domenech's use of the word volunteers means the veterans of the Mexican American War.

45 Taylor, Paul Schuster. *An American-Mexican Frontier, Nueces County, Texas*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p.36. Schuster is citing Olmsted's narrative.

46

47 Taylor, Paul Schuster. *An American-Mexican Frontier, Nueces County, Texas*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p.39.-citing F. Olmsted. Also see Fred J Rippy. *Border Problems Along the Rio Grande, 1848-1860*, in SWHQ 1919 Vol. 23 (2), pp.103-104, for information on Mexican removal from Texas.

48 Campbell, Randolph B. *An Empire for Slavery*, (Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p.117.

49 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 363. According to Danziger, Danny and John Gillinghan. *1215 The Year of Magna Carta*. (Simon & Schuster, 2003), p. 26. The freedom loving French had abolished slavery prior to the Norman Conquest in 1066.

50 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 9.

51 Campbell, Randolph B. *An Empire for Slavery,* (Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 117.

52 Ibid, pp. 132-133. For a horrid description of whipping read Mollie Dawson's account on page 147.

53 Tyler, Ron & Lawrence R. Murphy, ed. *The Slave Narratives of Texas.* (State House Press, 1997), p. xxvii.

54 Ibid.

55 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 363.

56 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures,* p. 22.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures,* p.151. Domenech attributed the breaks in the levees to "land crabs." He made have been describing crawdads which he explained, tunneled into the levees and when their tunnels became numerous, would weaken the levee creating a break.

60 Ibid, p. 158.

61 Brown, John. *Slave Life in Georgia,* Beehive Press, 1991), p. 33. In a time and place far removed from our world, a slave's existence was depended on the whims of their owners; whitemen like Domenech could not treat slaves as equals. John Brown described the fate of a fellow slave who had a "brave look when spoken to, [and] offended his master who swore he would flog his nigger pride out of him; and poor John had to suffer for having the look and carriage of a free man."

62 Montejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986.* (University of Texas Press, 1987), p. 30.

63 Ibid.

64 Ferguson, Henry N. *The Port of Brownsville: A Maritime History of the Rio Grande Valley* (Springman-King Press, 1976), p.111.

65 Ibid, p. 109.

66 Ferguson, Henry N. *The Port of Brownsville: A Maritime History of the Rio Grande Valley.* (Springman-King Press,1976), pp.110-111.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid. Santiago Brito later became Brownsville marshal and a special Texas Ranger [special was a term applied to minority lawmen in a time of racist discrimination]. He is depicted as a coward in the folk song, El Corrido de José Mosqueda. Brito was shot and killed in 1892. *Handbook of Texas Online,* s.v. "Brito, Santiago A, http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/BB/fbrbe.html (assessed April 1, 2005).

70 Graf, Leroy. *The Economic History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1820-1875.* (Unpublished Doctorate Thesis, Harvard, 1942),Vol. 1, p.48. Also see Chapter III , *Repercussions of Texas Independence, 1835-1846* for a detailed account of Mexican-Texan political relations and their effect on the border.

71 Ferguson, Henry N. *The Port of Brownsville: A Maritime History of the Rio Grande Valley.* (Springman-King Press,1976), p.108.

72 Southeast towards the Gulf of Mexico from Matamoros was a small smugglers settlement named Bagdad. With the loss of Brazos Santiago due the Union blockade, Bagdad became Matamoros port and was to play an important part in the wealth of many men during the American Civil War.

73 Montejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, p.19. Montejano, in citing Leroy Graf, stated that control of the port, which had served as Matamoros port, was the reason behind the boundary dispute between Mexico and the United States.

74 Graf, Leroy. *The Economic History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1820-1875.* (Unpublished Doctorate Thesis, Harvard, 1942),Vol. 2, p. 223.

75 Ibid.

76 Alonzo, Armando C. *Tejano Legacy Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas 1734-1900.* (University of New Mexico Press, 1998), p.154.

77 Montejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, p.38.

78 Tijerina, Andres. *Tejano Empire: Life on the South Texas Ranchos.* (Texas A&M Press), p.123.

79 Ibid

80 Mantejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986.* p. 38. Brownsville historian, Henry N. Ferguson in his book, *The Port of Brownsville: A Maritime History of the Rio Grande Valley.* (Springman-King Press, 1976), p. 109, mentioned that the founder of Brownsville, Charles Stillman, for example, found his Texas land purchase contested in 1849 by Rafael Garcia Cavazos. The Garcia family claimed the land under Spanish land grant, and the case was won in their favor. Stillman took his case to United States Supreme Court and won a decision in his favor.

81 Domenech, *Missionary Adventures*, p.241. Graf also wrote that land squatters were dealt with by the owner on a personal level rather than public. "The owner might choose to either to evict the squatter or to permit him to remain and pay an indefinite rent." LeRoy Graf in *Economics of the Lower Rio Grande*, Vol. 2, p. 223.

82 Castillo-Crimm, Ana C. *De Leon A Tejano Family History,* (University of Texas, 2003), p.197. Wrote Dr. Castillo-Crimm, "claim jumpers and squatters fighting to retain their lands were usually impoverished farmers who could be bought off." Some *Tejano* landowners recovered portions of their lands by this method and avoided the Texas justice system.

83 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 241

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid. In 1853 Domenech wrote about an election of Brownsville judges for an important case "it was nothing less than to know whose was the site of the town." He may have been referring to the "conflict between Town Company and the City Council" documented by LeRoy Graf in *Economics of the Lower Rio Grande*, Vol. 2, p. 253.

86 Castillo-Crimm, Ana C. *De Leon A Tejano Family History*, (University of Texas, 2003), p.179. In a letter written between Ysidro Benavides and Fernando De Leon, described the situations concerning the forged grants which "robbed the old pioneers of their hard earned homes."

87 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventure*, p. 240. Domenech may have not been directly involved in land disputes but may be repeating what he had heard. He disclosed "the American government distributed three hundred and twenty acres of land to emigrants, and six hundred and forty to school-masters, ministers of religion, and married colonists, established in Texas before 1847. After the Mexican war, it made a new distribution to volunteers and soldiers: as the registries of the civil administration had been kept very negligently, it happened that among the lands thus distributed, and considered as free, no small share had already its legitimate possessors, and other were uninhabitable from their situation." As a result there were multitudes of confused lawsuits over ownership.

88 Stiff, Col. Edward. *Texan Emigrant*, (Texian Press, 1968), p.195. "the land laws of Mexico and Texas, so vague and undefined are whole chapters of them that a summary containing everything necessary to be known was not obtained without much labor and expense; no lawyer in Texas will impart the same knowledge to any individual client for less than five hundred dollars." This description written in 1840 just as the population expanded into what many thought were the unpopulated regions of Texas.

89 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 239.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid, p. 228.

92 Bollaert, William. *Texas*. Eugene Hollon, Ed.(Oklahoma Press, 1956.) p. 338.

93 Ferguson, Henry N. *The Port of Brownsville: A Maritime History of the Rio Grande Valley*. (Springman-King Press, 1976.), p.108.

94 Ibid.

95 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 231.

96 Ibid, pp. 230-231.

97 Ibid, p. 141.

98 Chapman, Helen. *The News from Brownsville*. Caleb Coker, editor, (Texas State Historical Association, 1992), pp. 330-331.

99 Ibid. When Mrs. Chapman wrote Mexican she meant Mexican nationals, *Tejanos* and Mexican Americans.

100 Ibid, p. 238.

101 De Leon, Arnoldo. *They Called Them Greasers.* (The University of Texas Press, 1983), p. 63.

102 Ibid.

103 Alonzo, Armando C. *Tejano Legacy Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas 1734-1900.* (University of New Mexico Press, 1998), p.140.

104 Ibid.

105 Stambaugh, Lee J. and Stambaugh, L.J. *The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas.* (The Naylor Company, 1954), p. 95.

106 Thompson, J. and Lawrence T. Jones III. *Civil War and Revolution on the Rio Grande Frontier: a narrative and photographic history.* (Texas State Historical Association, 2004), p. 22. "By April 1850 a town government had been established. Aldermen, none of whom were Mexican American despite a majority of Hispanics in the town and country." Brownsville was determined to remain an American town in all aspects.

107 Horsman, Reginald. *Race and Manifest Destiny. The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism.* (Harvard University Press,1981) , p.186.

108 Wrote Frederic Gaillardet in 1839 of the Anglo Americans, "An invading people, scarcely settled in their conquest, are consumed by the arduous travail of their national birth and are struggling between a past which is henceforth overcome and a future which is yet to be won." *Sketches of Early Texas and Louisiana*, (University of Texas Press, 1966), p.13.

109 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 247

110 Ibid. Also see Levine, Robert M. *Cuba in the 1850s*, (South Florida Press, 1990), p. 11. The invasion failed and *López* was publicly garroted and his men executed and their bodies given to the mob.

111 Ibid. p. 249.

112 Turner, Frederick J. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History.* Turner argued in his thesis the frontier fashioned the democratic traditions of the United States. Domenech's observations revealed that democracy was only an ideal for the non-Anglo population and only practiced by Anglo settlers.

113 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures* , p. 249.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid, p. 268.

116 Ibid.

117 Chapman, Helen. Coker, Caleb, Ed., *The News from Brownsville Helen Chapman's Letters from the Texas Military Frontier, 1848-1852.* (Texas State Historical Association,

1992), p.149. "In early 1850 one correspondent wrote, 'Buildings are going up every day; goods arriving, steamboat loading and unloading and every person seems engaged to some useful employment. Not yet two years old, and numbering 2500 inhabitants.'

118 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 225.

119 Ibid, p. 327. Described as a very strong unbleached cloth, Domenech used the material to cover the ceiling of the church at Castroville, p. 193. and at Brownsville, p. 220.

120 Mora-Torres, Juan. *The Making of the Mexican Border.* (University of Texas Press,2001) p.28. According to Mora-Torres cotton was one of Coahuila, a Mexican state bordering Texas, main products. Transferred of cotton goods to the interior of Mexico was costly due to the high taxes paid at each state border crossing.

121 Rippy, Fred J. *Border Problems Along the Rio Grande, 1848-1860,* in SWHQ 1919 Vol. 23 (2), pp.95-96. Rippy argued British merchants were behind the high tariffs against American goods coming over the border. According to Leroy Graf, "British merchants in Mexico enjoyed a highly favored status." due to their ability to generate loans to the Mexican government. *Economics of Lower Rio Grande*, Vol. 2, p.308.

122 Thompson, J. and Lawrence T. Jones III. *Civil War and Revolution on the Rio Grande Frontier: a narrative and photographic history.* (Texas State Historical Association, 2004), p. 22.

123 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures* , p.327. The *Abbé* entitled this section of Chapter VIII, "Merchant War," and in 1858 may have been the originator of the term.

124 Montejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, p.48.

125 Ford, John Salmon. *Rip Ford's Texas*. Stephen B. Oates,Ed. (University of Texas Press,1963), p. 203. "General Carbajal stated to the writer, that the substance of a proposition made to him by Captain M. Kenedy, of the firm of King & Kenedy, to organize a provisional government with Carbajal as the head of government as well as commander-in-chief of the army."

126 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "MERCHANTS WAR," http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/MM/qym1.html (accessed February 3, 2005).

127 Viele, Teresa Griffin. *Following the Drum A Glimpse of Frontier Life.* (University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p.192. Ms. Viele also mentioned the planned uprising was "confided to many of the Texan lodge of Free-Masons, to which fraternity Carvajal belonged, and as their interests as merchants were a good deal involved in the issue, they joined heartily with the revolutionists." ibid.

128 Ibid, p.191. Carbajal was "to declare the northern portions of Mexico an independent State" and proposed American annexation for "support and protection."

129 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 328. Domenech described Carbajal's army as,"A crowd of American adventurers, who had fought [in] 1846-47 [and] were attracted by the hope of plunder and the lover of novelty. A couple of hundred discontented Mexicans joined this troop."

130 Stout, Jr. Joséph A. *Schemers & Dreamers: Filibustering in Mexico 1848-1921,* (Texas Christian University Press, 2002), p. 19.

131 Of interest, two authors, Tom Lea , *The King Ranch,* (Little,Brown and Co.,1957), Vol. 1, p.87, and John Salmon Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas.* (University of Texas Press,1963), pp.195-196, both referenced Domenech description of Carbajal during this point as a footnote. Mrs. Chapman in her memoirs, *The News from Brownsville,* described General Avalos, Carbajal's nemesis, as a thief, bandit, rapist and kidnapper, p.161.

132 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures,* p.328

133 Castillo-Crimm, Ana C. *De Leon A Tejano Family History,* (University of Texas, 2003), p.208. Carbajal borrowed $6,000 from his mother-in-law Dona Patricia De Leon to finance his revolution. She forgave his debt upon her death.

134 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures,* pp.330-336 & p.345.

135 Ibid, p. 333 & p. 341.Domenech included a copy of a New Orleans newspaper article mentioning the efforts of a "Catholic priest" in the release of the American prisoners.

136 Ibid, p. 341. The Merchant's War would not be the last battles fought in this region over cotton. A few years later, when Texas joined the Confederacy the Rio Grande border would be the site of wealth and death as nations fight over control of the cotton trade. Once again, businessmen on both sides of the river would make untold fortunes as the world came to their doorway to buy cotton.

137 For more on the importance of cotton in this region see: James W. Daddysman, *The Matamoros Trade,* (University of Delaware Press, 1984), James A Irby,. *Backdoor at Bagdad,* (Texas Western Press, 1977) and Jerry Thompson and Lawrence T. Jones III. *Civil War and revolution on the Rio Grande Frontier: a narrative and photographic history.* (Texas State Historical Association, 2004), also see Ronnie C. Tyler, *Cotton on the Border, 1861-1865.* SWHQ Vol. 73, No. 4, 1970, pp.456-477.

138 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures,* p.263.

139 Ibid. pp. 270-271. "The Mexicans promised me all the materials, while the ten Jewish dealers, who formed the financial aristocracy of Roma, offered me each five hundred francs." Today in Roma, one can find along the upper portion of a warehouse roofline, a carved hand of a scribe with feather pen over a sheep head with blood spilling from its side. A possible reference to Passover, when lamb's blood protected the Hebrews from the plagues of Egypt.

140 Mansos, a term used by Spanish Officials for *Apaches de Paz* identified by David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier 1821-1846,* (University of New Mexico Press, 1982), p. 109. Or the band may have been descendants of the *Manos de Perro* a tribe with roots in Coahuila. Foster, William C., *Spanish Expeditions Into Texas 1689-1768.* (University of Texas Press, 1995), p.277. Southwest Historian, Marc Simmons described the encounter between the Onate 1598 expedition and a tribe who called themselves, *manso,* a word similar in sound to the Spanish term *manso,* which meant "meek" or

"mild." See, *The Last Conquistador Juan De Onate and the Settling of the Far Southwest,* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 101.

141 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 275.

142 Ibid, p. 222.

143 Castaneda, Carlos E. *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas 1519-1936. Supplement 1936-1950.* (Von Voeckmann-Jones Company,1958), Vol. VII p.113. An 1850 trip took Bishop Odin to the border town of Eagle Pass, upriver from Brownsville, where he "welcomed by the inhabitants who had not seen a bishop for forty-five years."

144 Castillo-Crimm, Ana C. *De Leon A Tejano Family History,* (University of Texas, 2003), p. vii-Notes on Terminology. I have used the same terms used by Dr. Castillo-Crimm with the exception in this thesis the term Hispanic will refer to *Tejano*s, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans during this period.

145 Hinojosa, Gilberto Miguel. *A Borderlands Town in Transition Laredo, 1755-1870.* (Texas A&M Press,1983) p.65, states,"Mexicans who had moved to Brownsville belonged for most part to a property-less lower class. They preformed the menial tasks demanded by the mercantile economy."

146 Tijerina, Andres. *Tejano Empire. Life on the South Texas Ranchos.*(Texas A&M Press,1998.) p. xxi.

147 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 255.

148 Ibid,.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.

151 Domenech. *Missionary Adventures*, p. 238. Absence from Domenech's book is the mention of beggars.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid.

154 *Histoire du Mexique, Juarez et Maximilian, correspondences indites*, (Paris, 1868), *L'Empire au Mexique et la candidature d'un Prince Bonaparte au trone mexican.* (Paris, 1862), and *Le Mexique tel qu'il est*.(Paris, 1867), are books written by Domenech about his service in Mexico. The book contains insights into the Mexican problems with their northeastern border during the American Civil War.

155 One only needs to look at the evolution of Texas history and the rebellion, especially the story of the Alamo, as an example of the popularity of the subject.

156 Crisp, James E. *Sleuthing the Alamo,* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p.195. Crisp explained the shaping of history by the influence of accepted history and historical information from newly found documents. "Those omniscient narrators are usually drawn to their subject by personal histories not always obvious and infrequently revealed. Yet their own histories inevitably influence the way they do the telling, just as the circumstance of Ehrenberg or de la Pena influence their production of [Teas]

history," argues Dr. Crisp. While it is true that newly found historical documentation has the power to change historical perspective, fortunately, for present day historians history can no longer be whitewashed or buried since, once examined, historians must learn to live with the consequences and, unlike explanations, events do not change.

157 Domenech E., *Missionary Adventures*, p. 248.

158 Domenech, E. *Missionary Adventures*. p. 176. Domenech wrote of a Ranger attack and subsequent Lipan massacre on the Medina River, near Castroville. He may have been repeating the story of the death of Flaco, the son of the Lipan chief Castro, who was murdered and robbed by Rangers after he and his band helped the Rangers against other tribes. See Noah Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State*. (University of Texas Press, 1990), p.156.

159 Parisot, P.F. ,Rev. *The Reminiscences of a Texas Missionary*. (Johnson Bros. Printing Co. 1899), p.200.

160 Domenech, Emmanuel Henri Dieudonne. *"The Handbook of Texas Online."* http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/DD/fdo9.html. In speaking to Dr. David Weber at the Texas State Historical Association meeting in Fort Texas, 2005, he expressed surprised that *Abbé* Domenech was in Texas. He had been under the impression, Domenech was a European armchair writer who never visited America.

161http://www.neosoft.com/~sgriffin/houstonhistory/ethnic/history1french.htm. (accessed 2004)

162 The Handbook of Texas Online,s.v.Domenech, Emmanuel Henri Duedonne"

http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/DD/fdo9.html (accessed January 24, 2005).

Don Juan José de Solís, Albert Champion, the Border Cattle Raids, and the Birth of the Cattle Kingdom

by

Frank Champion Murphy

It is well known that cattle ranching was the basic industry of early Brownsville and the lower Rio Grande. What is less well known is that the area extending north from Brownsville to Corpus Christi and west to Laredo (which historians have called the Texas Triangle) was the birthplace of the "Cattle Kingdom" of the great American West. This region put one of the most distinctive stamps on American culture, epitomized by the legend of the cowboy on horseback.[1] The union of the Solís and Champion families at Point Isabel in the years following the Mexican War is a remarkable paradigm of the development of this culture.

Cattle ranching was introduced to *Tejas* in the lower Rio Grande valley by Spanish land grantees in the latter half of the 18th century. The *colonia*, or colony, of Nuevo Santander had its beginnings when Spanish officials groped for a way to stop England from seizing a strip of the Gulf coast during the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739). The territory of Nuevo Santander extended along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico north from Tampico to the Medina (now Nueces) River, and west to near the present Eagle Pass and Del Rio. This was the first and only time officials of New Spain relied on colonists rather than missionaries and soldiers to settle a new territory. Led by José de Escandón, the novel colonization project began in 1749, and by 1755 Escandón had moved over 6000 colonists into the *colonia* and established twenty-three towns and fifteen missions. Two of those towns, Laredo and Dolores, stood on the north side of the Rio Grande, as did the ranches of many of the colonists who lived on the south side of the river in communities such as Camargo, Mier and Reynosa.[2] Most of this area, especially that north of the Rio

Grande, was uncharted, trackless brush and chaparral, inhabited mainly by warlike, nomadic Indian tribes, wild Longhorn cattle and horses.

The first Spanish cattle, landed in Santo Domingo by Columbus, were brought to Mexico in 1521 by Gregorio de Villalobos, and with them, shortly after, Hernán Cortez stocked his great estate, which he appropriately named *Cuernavaca* - Cow Horn.[3] In the traditional Spanish practice, cattle were branded and turned loose to be rounded up; calves were branded and sorted for disposition annually, but their increase very soon outpaced the husbandry capacities of their owners. In 250 years, by the 1770s, these now wild cattle are estimated to have numbered in millions, ranging from central Mexico north over the vast, semi arid plains and across the Rio Bravo. The original cattle brought from Spain were horned, but the great, spreading, majestic growths which gave the Longhorns their name developed inexplicably over generations of ranging in this cruel environment of north central Mexico. One explanation might be Darwinian: that they developed as protection against the great numbers of huge *lobos* – wolves – and other predators, including bears that roamed the area. The Longhorns preceded the colonists and provided them with a basis for their sustenance. To establish a cattle ranch was a relatively simple, though by no means effortless, process of rounding up and branding as many head of cattle and the wild, tough little mustang horses as you could find on your own land (and eventually on your neighbors' ranges wearing your brand, especially unbranded calves and colts following cows and mares wearing your brand). A meager sustenance it was, however, by any standards. There was essentially no market for beef, the *hacendado's* primary cash crop. Even the market for hides and tallow was limited in this remote, sparsely populated area.

It was a colonial society, and the economic rewards were hard earned and seldom great. Cattle ranching involved working wild, dangerous animals over great expanses of rough, brutal terrain. It required special skills performed almost entirely on horseback,

skills developed by generations of the Spanish Mexican *vaqueros*. Most of these cattle had never seen a human. Mounted, a man would be given some respect, but he approached the long-horned beasts on foot at great peril, for they fought fiercely any effort to be restrained or overpowered. It was dangerous work, requiring physical strength and skills learned from punishing experience. These men did not consider themselves peasant farm laborers. A culture developed in New Spain – Mexico - known as the *charro*. The *charro* was not just a horseman or cowboy; he represented a genuine culture and way of life, characterized by an utter disdain for any work that could not be done in the saddle, a posture he passed on *in toto* to his cultural heir, the Anglo-American cowboy. There was an old saying: "to be a *vaquero* is to be a hero; to be a *ranchero* is to be a king".[4]

Despite this economic and cultural interdependency, the deep class cleavage of all Hispanic society persisted between *hacendado* and *vaquero*. The landowner class eschewed any and all forms of physical activity related to providing sustenance, and even commercial activity for profit was considered beyond the pale. This, however, apparently did not apply to profit from products of the land, as in this case livestock, although there is little evidence of any concerted, aggressive effort on the part of the *hacendado* to market his livestock. To make cattle ranching in the western United States and elsewhere the huge economic enterprise it became would require the addition of that special Anglo-American, the entrepreneur.

The Spanish Land Grants of the Lower Rio Grande

The Spanish-Mexican land grants located between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande varied in size from 601,657 acres (that of *San Juan de Carricitos*, No.1-764, made to José Narciso Cabazos) down to one of 1,291.23 acres. The *porciones*, or portions, as devised by Col. Escandón, were a special kind of land grant along the banks of the Rio Grande. They were narrow tracts averaging around 6,400 acres with a minimum river frontage of one thousand *varas* wide (a *vara* was about 33 1/3 inches), and

extending back from the river from twelve to over twenty miles. They were laid out "so a watering place at the river be given to everyone, otherwise the cattle will certainly perish and the *porciones* of land become useless."[5] Actually these boundaries existed only on paper; in effect, with no fences, any cattle in the area had access to any part of the river. Of some 300 *porciones* that were laid out, about 170 were ultimately titled by Spanish Authorities.[6]

Porcion No. 107 on the north bank of the river near the present Rio Grande City in Starr County, Texas, was granted to Don Juan José de Solís in 1767. He is the only Solís named in the Nuevo Santander (Texas) colony grants; there are records of Solís in the central area of Mexico dating to 1589, and it is believed that Juan José was descended from them[7].

Col. Escandón had to have been one of history's great real estate developers. How he was able to talk some 6,000 Spanish families, many of them *gentes de razon* ("the educated ones", "the right people") into this sparse, rude existence, is difficult to imagine. "He sent out word to enlist five hundred volunteer families to found the first fourteen towns of New Santander. Seven hundred families applied. Those families were given free land, a gift of money amounting to between one and two hundred pesos, and a ten-year exemption from taxes. If the lower river settlement came late, it came fast. Straw huts were soon replaced by earthen houses, stone churches, and plastered walls with carved wooden doors, all squared around a central plaza. Colonists faced many challenges:

> Floods rose ... the towns of Camargo, Reynosa, and Revilla were removed to higher ground ... Laredo was moved across the river to the south bank ... Smallpox epidemics struck ... there were seasons of drought, and at its best life was hard and meager. But it was tenacious, and the river was its home. Vast as it was, the province of New Santander had little wealth in the great world's terms of money,

> purchasable beauty, luxury, or even comfort. Its material values were all reckoned in the earthiest terms – hides, horn, beef, mutton, wool, salt, fish, fruit. Distances were very great, summers were violent with heat, drought or deluge; winters were subject to wild icy storms out of the north.[8]

As discouraging as all this might sound, it was not the worst. Much worse than any of this, they were to learn, were the unremitting raids by some of the most savage, warlike Indian tribes: the Comanche, Apache, and Lipan Apache. The Apaches struck out of the mountains just to the west, and the Comanches rode down a well-marked trail in the spring and fall.[9] They were nomads and had no interest in cattle, but prized the wild Spanish mustangs which ranged with the cattle on both sides of the river. Before the arrival of the colonists, the ranges on both banks of the river and occasionally as far east as Matamoros had been their province. The Indians considered the Spanish settlements a hostile takeover of their territory, and they reacted violently, killing, burning, torturing, and even kidnapping and enslaving women and children.

At first, Spain had provided garrisons to protect the settlers, but as her economy dwindled in the latter part of the 18th century, the troops were withdrawn, and the settlers were on their own. Don Juan Solís had suffered enough of Indian raiders, and he decided to relocate farther east. During the year 1784, when an heir of Don José de Escandón, Don Andres Vicente de Urrizar, sold his 113 leagues from the eastern *porciones* of Reynosa to the shores of the Gulf on the south side of the Rio Grande, Don Juan José Solís with Don Juan de Hinojosa purchased 7½ sitios, which are now known as the Soliseño.[10] Don Juan de Hinojosa was probably related to Don Juan José Solís' wife, Dona Maria Gertrudis Hinojosa, possibly a brother. The Solís established residence in this area, possibly in Refugio, now Matamoros. A grandson, José Jesús Solís, became *alcalde* of Refugio in 1811.[11]

The Fortunes of War

In the spring of 1846, a festering dispute between the United States and Mexico over the territory between the Nueces River to the north and the Rio Grande developed into the War with Mexico. This land, unsettled and virtually unoccupied, had been included in the boundaries of the Republic of Texas, but when the Republic petitioned the United States for statehood, Mexico refused to honor this claim, and strongly reinforced their claim with an armed force, made up mainly of elite cavalry units. In the opening battles of the conflict, taking place at Palo Alto and at the Resaca de la Palma on the north side of the river opposite Matamoros, the American forces under General Zachary Taylor were victorious, and the Mexican army retreated south of the river.

In 1846 and 1847, as Taylor's army moved south into Mexico, there was a total breakdown of discipline, law, and order on the part of both the Americans, the occupiers, and the occupied Mexican population. Consequently,

> ... in a very short while, Matamoros was a bear pit. A powerful strain of the United States energy came into play, with high animal spirits, rowdyism, bright lights and noise and waste and extravagance and arrogance ... Out of the violent humor of boredom, they made of Matamoros a raw American town in the summers of 1846 and 1847.[12]

The Solís family, fleeing from the chaos with several sons and daughters, crossed the Rio Grande to a tiny village on the Gulf coast called El Frontón de Santa Ysabel, later Point Isabel (Brownsville did not yet exist) seeking security within the shadow of the nearby U.S. garrison of Fort Polk[13]. This would have been only a short time before the arrival in Point Isabel of four young brothers with the surname of Champion. They were Albert, age 32, Peter, 30, Andrew, 26, and Nicholas, 23, sons of an old family, Campeoni, in Rovigno, a town near Trieste on the northeast Adriatic coast of Italy. Tall, large-framed men, they were light skinned and fair

haired, typical of the Northern Italian breed. The men of the second generation whom I knew were of this mold, and in the snapshots of Albert's son Frank, my grandfather, he appears to be blonde and well over six feet tall.

The Austrian Empire under the Hapsburgs had taken over most of the Adriatic coast at the Vienna Congress in 1815, and the young men, faced with conscription by the hated Austrian army, went to sea, separately, as each became of age for service. After several years sailing the world in various capacities on the "stately sailships of the period"[14] ... the four brothers, by fortune or design, had come by 1846 to reside at the port city of New Orleans. They had experienced many of the nations of the world, great and small, almost all of them monarchies or oligarchies such as the one they had fled, and the United States of America, with its shining new promise of democracy, freedom and individual rights, left them no doubt as to where their futures should lie.

Upon his arrival on the Rio Grande early in 1846, General Zachary Taylor had established his garrison and main supply base at Point Isabel on the Laguna Madre with its access to the Gulf of Mexico through the Brazos de Santiago Pass. To bring in the enormous tonnage of supplies required, the U.S. government marshaled great numbers of ships, mainly at New Orleans, the most important port in the Gulf of Mexico. The Champion brothers with their experience in sailing vessels immediately became a part of this.

The great numbers of freight vessels of all descriptions, steam and sail, would lie at anchor in the Gulf off Brazos waiting for their cargo to be lightered through the pass and three miles across Laguna Madre to the wharves at Fort Polk. To break the monotony of rocking at anchor off Brazos for days at a time, the brothers did what young, adventurous sailors have always done in strange ports. They went ashore to see the sights, and sights there were for certain. The transient population of the little village with the tumbledown shacks and tents of its first years had disappeared, to be replaced by Taylor's huge supply depot surrounded by earthen

embankments and armed by naval guns. No civilian structures were allowed within the immediate vicinity of the fort, so the village of Point Isabel was established ¾ of a mile to the north. Here some prominent merchants from New Orleans and Corpus Christi had established warehouses, forwarding agencies and stores, forming a thriving business community[15]. The scene was alive with the sounds of hammers and saws and shouts and chatter, and the sights of wagons of lumber and materials unloading and buildings and dwellings taking shape. New Orleans had been impressive, but this was America on the rise. This was where the action was! They may have been aware of the great Louisiana Purchase, but were probably oblivious of the thousands of miles of unmarked, brutal wilderness beyond the western edge of this tiny community. One aspect to which they were likely not oblivious was the presence in the community of several very attractive, stylishly dressed – and relentlessly chaperoned – young Spanish ladies.

The Champions remained on their ships through the end of the war in 1848, when they eagerly took up residence in Point Isabel, and wasted no time in contributing a burst of entrepreneurial vigor to the community. Albert at first opened a general merchandise store; Peter engaged in the hotel business; and Nicholas built sail lighters with which the brothers became engaged in transporting goods and passengers from shipside off the bar to the wharves of Point Isabel. They purchased town lots and built homes. But opportunity of a much more dazzling sort caught the eye of adventurous Andrew.

> In 1849 news of a gold strike in California was in everyone's mouth and several citizens of Point Isabel joined expeditions making the trek across the continent to their fortunes. Andrew got the fever and despite the earnest entreaties of his brothers ... he sailed to California by way of Panama, then a dense jungle isthmus, traversed part of the way by a river and then by an old Spanish trail. There

was communication for a time, and then suddenly, silence, and all efforts to reach him failed.[16]

Sometime later, Joséph, age 20, the youngest of the six brothers, came to Point Isabel, and finally, much later, arrived their nephew George, born in 1840 to Simone II, the oldest brother (who had stayed in Rovigno with their parents).

The year 1849 brought the establishment of the United States Post Office and Customs Office in abandoned buildings of the old Fort Polk. But civilization was not yet fully realized. A few miles to the west, at Palo Alto on the Brownsville road, a large band of Comanches had made attacks on local ranches, and committed acts of startling barbarity. The newly arrived customs collector bitterly complained to his superiors of the perilous position of his station, describing not only the Indian attack but referring to the "celebrated Mexican robber chief and spy employed by General (Winfield) Scott during the war, who was turned loose with his whole company and was committing daily depredations along the Rio Grande".[17]

A Union of Cultures

With their impressive entry into the economic and civic life of the community, the Champions had apparently won acceptance, even friendship, from the parents of the young Solís sisters, Francisco and Anastacia Rivas Solís, to the point that courtship was allowed. The girls were no doubt more than ready. Peter and Felicitas Solís, age 18, were the first to marry, in 1849 or 1850, followed in 1850 by Albert and Estefania Solís, (who would be my great-grandparents). In turn, Nicholas and Teresa Solís would be wed, and, some time later, the brothers' nephew George and Cirilda Solís. Before George arrived, however, Joseph, the youngest of the brothers, was to marry Marcela García, a cousin of the four sisters on her mother's (Antonia Solís) side[18]. The Garcías apparently also resided in Point Isabel. So the union of the *hacendado ranchero* and the entrepreneur cultures was now a reality, five-fold.

As the city of Brownsville developed after the war, there were two means for transport of goods between the port and the city: overland in heavy wagons drawn by mules, horses or oxen, or by boats on the river. Early in the war, the Army Engineers saw the need for shallow draft river steamboats to transport materiel and troops for the Rio Grande campaign. Among those contracted with by the army was a young, educated, devout Pennsylvanian Quaker riverboat master named Mifflin Kenedy. Foreseeing the need of a capable and dependable mate, he wrote to an experienced riverboat pilot of his acquaintance, a rough-cut young Irishman named Richard King, at 23 seven years Kenedy's junior. The two men maintained a river steamboat company based in Brownsville for several years after the war, and formed a lifetime partnership involving many highly successful commercial ventures, the most notable of which would be the world famous King ranch.[19]

The Rio Grande was a most unreliable venue, however, even for veteran river pilots. In periods of drought, boats were aground; with heavy rains it would overflow its banks, spreading over low-lying ground, or change course entirely, leaving resacas and new loops in its tortuous path. Albert Champion responded to the need for more reliable transport between the Gulf and Brownsville by establishing the U.S. Stage Mail Line, assuring not only prompt mail service but dependable passenger connections with the departing New Orleans steamers.

The western terminus of the Stage Mail Line was the new Webb and Miller House, later the Miller Hotel, and, briefly during the Civil War, the Sharkey and Champion Hotel, Brownsville's finest and most popular. In the early 1850's a large sign nailed to the veranda read "Take Stage for Brazos Here". The original Webb and Miller's was not operated as a hotel in the modern sense. It was a restaurant and barroom with lodgings for a limited number of occasional guests. In those early post-war days of the 1850's, Brownsville had no city hall or county courthouse, and the Webb and Miller House soon became the gathering place for the town's business and civic leaders.[20] But it was not the staid, self-satisfied,

bay-windowed sort typical of Boston or New York. Brownsville was a hectic, unruly frontier town on the rise, and the "establishment" leaders were young, restless men full of enterprising vigor. We can picture the bar and restaurant noisy and crowded, full of high spirits and jocularity, with even the Quaker Kenedy joining in. It was a "Young Boys' Club", a sort of Junior Chamber of Commerce, with much of the talk inevitably centering on new opportunities.

A Vision of Land and Cattle

For as far as the eye could see into their new nation to the north and west there was practically nothing but raw, untamed land, cattle, and horses, awaiting exploitation. King, Kenedy, and Stillman went north into the Gulf coastal Sand Belt country, acquiring land from among others the vast grants of the Ballí and de la Garza families. Josiah Turner established his Galveston Ranch on the Rio Grande above Brownsville, and Albert Champion bought a large tract adjoining it on the river to the west and developed the La Florida (the oldest ranch settlement in Cameron County) and the La Gloria Ranches. These tracts extended to the Tío Cano Lake, fifteen miles from the river, where he maintained other ranches.[21] In our family, "Tío Cano" was always referred to as a separate ranch.

I have on my wall two branding irons. The larger iron is the typically American one of Albert Champion: the capital letter "A" with the cross bar of the A extending to meet the curve of the "C", reading "AC Connected." All of the stock I knew on La Gloria in the 1930's carried this brand. The smaller iron, apparently a cheek brand, is a typical Spanish brand consisting of an attractive calligraphic design, unreadable, at least to the uninitiated. Both brands were Albert's, although I have not so far been able to determine the origin of the Spanish brand. I have an old photo, taken at La Gloria, of a tough looking little mustang carrying a larger version of this brand on his right hindquarter. A possible explanation of the Spanish brand's origin could be that it came from the La Florida or one of the Tío Cano ranches, originally

Spanish owned, which Albert acquired, or it could possibly have been a Solís brand.

For all of the apparent opportunity, cattle ranching was not much of a business in the 1850's. Locally, on the Rio Grande, there was essentially no market for beef on the hoof. As early as 1840, one or two efforts had been made to drive herds north to New Orleans, and one drive was reported to have reached Chicago, moving down farm roads and around or through towns and farms. But the returns were not worth the effort. Thousands of small farms east of the Mississippi were able to supply the beef market with the domestic British breeds. The best market for Texas beef, such as it was, would remain in the industrial east for hides, tallow, hooves and horns. These were shipped from the Gulf coast, with hundreds of thousands of carcasses left rotting on the tidal flats for the buzzards and coyotes.

A Clash of Cultures

Indications are that the aforementioned lands were in each case acquired through fair and legal transactions, but problems with land rights and ownership had begun in Texas in the 1830's with the establishment of the Republic and became rife with the postwar influx of Americans and Europeans to the lower Rio Grande.

> There is some truth that many Mexican landowners ... were robbed in south Texas by force, intimidation, or chicanery. But what is usually ignored is the fact that the *hacendado* class, as a class, was stripped of property perfectly legally, according to the highest traditions of U.S. law. There was certainly ignorance on one side, and chicanery on the other, but the real problem stemmed from a continual change in sovereignty in this region: Spain to Mexico, and Mexico to Texas and then to the United States. The English common law and Hispanic law conflicted, particularly on such matters as ... holdings in common, or *ejidos* ... In 1782, Don José

Salvador de la Garza received the Espiritu Santo *merced* (type of grant) of 260,000 acres along the north bank of the Rio Grande; this included all the land upon which Brownsville would be located. Lands and titles passed, with some confusion, to children and heirs, with some splitting, according to the Spanish custom. One of the principal heirs was Doña Estefana Goseascochea, who, widowed, married the *alcalde* of Camargo, Trinidad Cortinas (*sic.*; Fehrenbach alone uses the 's' in the spelling) ... A horde of American businessmen, squatters, and ex-soldiers bearing Texas veterans' land certificates arrived on Espiritu Santo lands claiming that the land around Brownsville was "vacant" or national land ... A swarm of claims were filed, and a swarm of lawyers found employment. As a Texas historian wrote, three square leagues were "extracted by American lawyers to straighten out the titles from the old (Mexican) landowners: Doña Estefana, again widowed, conveyed some 4,000 acres of her inheritance to a firm of lawyers in order to get them to secure her title to the rest. Meanwhile, the merchant Charles Stillman laid out and founded the city of Brownsville on 1,500 acres of the de la Garza grant. Title *was* unclear ... a ruling was secured in favor of the (Spanish) heirs; however, the 1,500 acres in question ended up in the hands of an American law firm who sold it to Stillman for a fraction of the appraised value. The imposition of American law infuriated most Mexican (Spanish) landowners. The humbler classes of Mexicans were treated with contempt; now the upper class felt that American courts were not upholding their ancient rights. The soil of the lower Rio Grande Valley was becoming ripe for revolution.[22]

And the revolution did come, if from an expectable source, still in a quite unpredictable way. At times, it took on a comic-opera aspect, but nevertheless with deadly and long-lasting effect. The Spanish-American Doña Estéfana Goseascochea de Cortina accepted her fate at the hands of the American system and remained a good, responsible American citizen. However, her son Juan Nepomuceno "Cheno" Cortina, born in 1824, had no such inclination. He shared none of his family's gentility ... He was wild ... uneducated by choice ... a *vaquero* rather than a border aristocrat, by personal taste ... who preferred to ride with a roistering crowd of lowly cowmen.[23] He was also boiling mad, infuriated by the Americans' treatment of the Spanish-Mexican people, bitter about the American conquest of his native land.

In 1859, living on his mother's ranch about nine miles northwest of Brownsville, he was a fuse waiting to be lit. In Brownsville, on the morning of July 13, Cheno witnessed the city marshal, Robert Shears, arresting a drunken Mexican who had once been a Cortina servant, on the street. The marshal, all accounts agree, was unnecessarily brutal. He gave the drunken Mexican the standard treatment. Cortina protested, apparently reasonably, and was rewarded with an insult no *caballero* could take. Guns were drawn. The marshal fell with a bullet in his shoulder, and Cheno put his rescued servant up behind his saddle, and galloped out of town.[24]

The Brownsville authorities made a serious mistake in not going after Cortina, but allowed him to remain on the ranch with his cohorts, plotting further revenge. At three a.m. on 28 September 1859, he rode into Brownsville. The townsfolk had just enjoyed an evening of festivities. With a force of *vaqueros* estimated variously as from 100 to 400, Cortina proceeded to kill at least three Americans and one Mexican who was shielding an American friend. They then released all the prisoners from the jail and hoisted the Mexican flag over the recently evacuated Fort Brown. However, the Cortinista *vaqueros* did not have the technical skill to keep their flag flying from its pole. The raiders roamed the town, shooting and shouting, during which time not a single citizen of

this mercantile community showed up on the streets ... some have estimated Brownsville's Anglo-American population at the time at as few as forty. Ironically, two Mexican officers, one a cousin of Cheno, Miguel Tijerina, and the other, General Carvajal, the commander of the Matamoros garrison, crossed over the river from Mexico, and liberated the panic-stricken town.[25]

Cortina rode back to his mother's Rancho del Carmen and apparently issued his first *pronunciamento*, attacking all American lawyers and *políticos*. He kept the town surrounded and cut off, terrorizing the surrounding ranch country. He intercepted the stagecoach, and held an American named Campbell prisoner to read the mail to him. Albert Champion sent a message to Brownsville:

> I shall send no mail tomorrow, since it is pretty certain that the rider will be taken. As to the New Orleans Mail, unless a strong force is given to escort and defend it, I shall not send it by the usual route. I expect it on Monday next. If I am allowed an escort, I shall wait until I can send it safely or avail myself of such opportunity as time, patience and circumstance will permit ... every ranch between this (Point Isabel) and Brownsville is deserted ... the people of Brownsville have no idea how defenseless we are ... it is an act of mercy that Cortina spares us.[26]

There was a period of quiet for some weeks while Cortina pondered the options for his *ad lib* revolution. Meanwhile, the citizens of Brownsville had mustered sufficient courage to form a militia of 24 Americans they bravely dubbed the "Brownsville Tigers." Armed with two small cannon, one of them sent over from Matamoros, the force cautiously approached the enemy, believed to be holding captive an American-owned ranch. They moved so cautiously, in fact, that it took the Tigers four days to reach ranch, located a mere three miles out of town. When they finally encountered a

few *vaqueros* in the brush at Santa Rita, and some firing began, the whole troop "made a desperate charge – for home." They left their two brass cannon behind, and made far better time returning than in going out. The merchants and citizens of Brownsville were not gunmen. Most of them had never seen an Indian or killed a man, and they could not be compared to the border dwellers who lived farther north along the frontier.[27]

The "revolution" and siege of Brownsville continued into December, accented at times with further comic highlights. "He (Cheno) fired a salute from the captured cannon each morning to wake the town."[28] There were very deadly results involving troops of Texas Rangers and sizeable detachments of the U.S. Army. After Brownsville was "liberated" in December, Cortina's army, by now numbering some 300, mostly Mexicans (most Texas Mexicans and indeed his own family including his mother not supporting him), moved up the river as far as Rio Grande City, raiding and plundering. They were pursued in running battles involving King's and Kenedy's steamboat mounted with cannons. Cortina retreated into Mexico, where the Rangers followed, doing some shooting and developing an international situation. At this point, the U.S. Army commander in Texas, Lt. Colonel Robert E. Lee, was sent to the border to resolve the crisis. He had authority "to pursue Mexicans beyond ... the United States." But that was not the style of "this dignified, utterly superior, beautifully self-controlled Colonel." He advised the Mexican officials that if Cortina were held in check, there would be peace; if not ... there would be war. They were able to get this very simple message across to Cortina, who promptly found other, more profitable and less risky ventures to pursue in Mexico, at least for the time being. A popular celebrity in Mexico, he became a brigadier in the Mexican army and, soon afterward, the military governor of the state of Tamaulipas. He did not give up sponsoring raids into his old homeland, but he was to have no further opportunity until the aftermath of the American Civil War,[29] when the border cattle raids would assume major proportions.

It was now April of 1860. In the Cortina War, most of the *ranchos* from Brownsville to Rio Grande City had been abandoned or destroyed. Fifteen Americans, one hundred fifty Cortinistas, and eighty Texas Mexicans, loyal or neutral, died. But the evil that was spawned lived on; there was to be even more blood shed on the Rio Grande.[30]

The Civil War: Change for Albert and Estefania

The impact of the Civil War on Brownsville was great and has been thoroughly documented, but except for its impact on Albert Champion and his family, it is not our story. In November of 1863, when a Union force of 6,000 troops landed on the north beaches of the Brazos de Santiago, establishing a base at Point Isabel, a grand jury on which Albert was serving in Brownsville was in session; it was hurriedly dismissed, and there began a general exodus of the local citizenry across the river to Mexico. At this time Albert and Estefania with their six children (George, Francisca, Frank, Joséph, Eufemia and Rosa) and indeed all of the Champion families were living in Point Isabel. Apparently all were able to evacuate their homes and take up residence in Matamoros for the remaining year and a half of the war. It was a chaotic situation, with hundreds of Brownsville families living in makeshift conditions. Could there have been Solís relatives living there to help the Point Isabel family? Into this turmoil Estefania gave birth to her seventh and last child, Anna, called Anita.

At the end of hostilities in 1865, General Frederick Steele, commanding Federal forces along the Rio Grande, offered amnesty to all those who wished to return to their homes. Albert and Estefania returned to Point Isabel to find their home had been appropriated by the Union troops and removed to Brazos Island, possibly for use as a port control station. Inland, his ranch stock had all disappeared, together with his stage line equipment and stock. They then decided to become residents of Brownsville, to build a home at Tenth and Washington streets in the old Spanish

colonial style around a central courtyard, to reestablish the stage line, and to re-stock the ranches[31].

The restoration of Albert's and Estefania's lives did not mean instant peace and prosperity, however. As throughout the South, Reconstruction would plunge South Texas and Brownsville into a period of

> extreme lawlessness and terror in which anyone might fall victim to the rage of incensed banditry which could put a man to death for the slightest cause. When the district court convened at Brownsville in 1867, Albert Champion and other prominent citizens served on the grand jury, of which Mifflin Kenedy was foreman. These men had the courage, at great personal risk, to execute the laws and bring the offenders to justice. Sheriffs and juries were intimidated, witnesses murdered, and jailbreaks were common. More than seventy offenders were convicted and sent to the penitentiary."[32]

Now, at last, the time had arrived for cattle ranching to come into its own. The end of the Civil War brought an explosion of growth to the great cities of the north and a corresponding demand for beef. Simultaneously, rails were laid farther and farther west across Kansas. It was now possible to drive cattle north across the vast unfenced and unsettled prairies west of San Antonio, Austin, Fort Worth, and through the Indian reservations of Oklahoma to the railheads at Abilene and Dodge City, where the wild-eyed bawling Longhorns were loaded into cattle cars for the trip to Chicago and the eastern markets. Sometimes the gigantic horns, measuring as much as eight feet across, had to be sawn off to get a steer into the car.

The Birth of a Kingdom

Cattle had become big business. A steer worth four dollars on the Rio Grande brought thirty to forty dollars in the booming North.

It was these very ranchers, King, Kenedy, Turner, Champion and many others of the "Texas Triangle," sending the great trail herds north, often to stock new ranches in the Mexican mold throughout the west, who gave birth to the "Cattle Kingdom" of the great American West.[33] Unknowingly, they put one of the most distinctive stamps on American culture.

> These trails became rivers of Longhorns, surging and flowing to locate themselves and establish the ranching industry – in the Indian Territory; on the high Plains of Texas; over New Mexico, Arizona, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, Wyoming, Montana; in parts of Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, and away on into Canada. It is estimated that in the twenty-five years following the Civil War, at least ten million Texas cattle were driven north to the railheads or to stock western ranches ... A million on paper has come to mean nothing. Conceived of as units of hoofs and horns, it is something different. The conception of ten million of such units streaming up the long trails appalls the imagination.[34]

The tough, lean, long-legged Longhorns were the perfect critters for the job. Ten to fifteen men, and often boys of fifteen or sixteen, would drive a herd of 2500 to 3500 and more cattle for months over a thousand miles of grinding, eighteen hour days in the saddle. They would endure the misery of rain and hailstorms or choking, blinding dust, deadly, lightning-triggered stampedes in the night, Indian attacks, and the crossing of roiling, swollen rivers, for a dollar a day and grub. They were paid off when the cattle were loaded, in some of the wildest, most lawless and morally degraded towns anywhere. And so the American cowboy legend was born.

The ranching practice, alluded to earlier, of running branded cattle free on vast unfenced ranges with annual or semi-annual cooperative roundups was Spanish Mexico's major contribution

to American beef cattle ranching. Although it has been modified by the introduction of the inexpensive barbed wire fence, another, inadvertent, contribution has become unalterable: the language of the cowboy and of the American West. From the beginning and throughout the migration of cattle, horses, and men from the Rio Grande, the *"gringo"* cowboys acquired from their vaquero mentors along with a lifestyle a vocabulary of terms, often quaintly corrupted from the Spanish for which in many cases there was no English synonym, such as: *rancho*, ranch; *corral*, corral; *vaquero*, buckaroo; *mesteno*, mustang; *la reata*, lariat; *chaparreras*, chaps; *jaquima*, hackamore[35]; and *juzgado* became hoosegow, to mention just a few. The trade worked in reverse, too: it is said the Mexicans coined, for example, the word *gringo* from an old American folk song popular with the cowboys, "Green Grow the Lilacs".

A New Industry – Cattle Theft

But prosperity in the cattle business did not bring order, much less tranquility. Escalating cattle prices may have been a bonanza to the ranchers on the American side of the Rio Bravo, but in the postwar climate of lawlessness and violent crime prevailing throughout Texas they made thievery of livestock an irresistible pursuit for those so inclined, of which there were altogether too many, on both sides of the river. Thousands of bitter, disillusioned men who deserted the Confederate army in the last months of the war were driven to criminal activity. In 1876, Adjutant General Steele compiled a roster of 3,000 known fugitives on the fringes of Texas. One newspaper estimated that 100,000 horses were stolen by "white" thieves between 1875 and 1878. Almost 1,000 men were engaged in running horses, but hardly one in ten was brought to justice. In 1879 Governor Oran Roberts told the legislature bluntly that the "amount and character" of crime in Texas was "entirely unprecedented" in the United States. There was much rustling, raiding and brutality by Anglo-Americans against both Anglo and Spanish American ranchers, as well as depredations into Mexico; men of some wealth or influence were often engaged in or behind the organized rustling.[36]

But the greatest bonanza befell the old nemesis, Cheno Cortina. During the Civil War in the United States, Cheno had retired into a mode of public service - read power - almost respectability, becoming in turn the *alcalde* of Matamoros and governor of Tamaulipas, as well as the general in command of the army of northern Mexico. Now, with the breakdown of order in the Reconstruction, his opportunities were manifold. From the sinecure of his powerful office, effectively manipulating activities over the vast, remote, corrupt, and governmentally chaotic region of northeast Mexico, he was very soon making enormous profits shipping cattle, especially American cattle imported "by the dark of the moon", to the Spanish army in Cuba at $18 a head. Even more flagrantly, as brigadier general he sent his *vaquero* raiders, some of them soldiers, across the Rio Grande to fill his beef contracts with the Mexican army. [37]

Although the most notorious, Cortina was only one; the raiders numbered in the hundreds, the stolen cattle in the thousands. Cattle and horses bearing American brands were sold in open market in Mexico with full knowledge and even complicity of Mexican authorities at all levels. The raiders rode in large bands of heavily armed, dangerous men who met any resistance with murder and even torture. This in turn brought organized resistance from Texans who made counter raids into Mexico to recover or "replace" lost stock or just to get even, until a virtual state of war existed. In 1872, a grand jury for the United States District Court stated that, "It is believed that since the close of the Civil War an average of about five thousand cattle have been stolen from Texas monthly, and the actual value is $6,300,000."[38]

On March 20, 1875, an Army telegram from the Department of Texas was relayed by General W.T. Sherman to Secretary of War Belknap:

> The country between Corpus Christi and the Rio Grande is in a state of confusion and war, and is full of armed bands of Mexicans, robbing and devastating

the whole section. Five ranches have been burned and several people killed and wounded. Wires cut between Corpus Christi and Brownsville. A courier sent from King's ranch brings intelligence that they are surrounded by a large party of Mexicans, and ask for aid."[39]

Apparently the plea brought no response from Washington, and the relatively small garrisons at Fort Brown and elsewhere up the river, mostly infantry, were completely ineffectual against such attacks. General Alexander McCook reported from Fort Brown that it was almost impossible to capture the thieves because of the limited number of troops and the ease of crossing the Rio Grande.[40]

The old La Gloria ranch house, as we knew it in the 1930s, still had heavy iron bars on all the windows like a jail-house, and heavy wood planks that fit into iron brackets on the inside of the double doors for protection. The easily fordable Rio Grande was just a few hundred yards through the chaparral behind the house. The occupants of the house must have frequently been treated to the sight of their cattle being herded towards the Rio Grande right outside their windows. My great aunt, Tia Eufemia, was the eldest of Albert's youngest three children, all daughters who never married. She was a petite, refined, meticulously dressed lady who did fine needlework, but her blue-gray eyes had a mischievous twinkle; occasionally, during the quiet siesta hours in her airy Brownsville bedroom she would take out a sack of Bull Durham and roll herself a cigarette. One still afternoon when I was in my teens, she went to her dresser drawer with a conspiratorial air, and proudly showed me a shiny, nickel-plated .32 caliber Smith & Wesson revolver in a glossy black patent-leather holster. When she was young, in the bad old days, she had helped her father in selling cattle. She kept the pistol in her handbag "because, you know, I had to deal with some pretty rough customers" ... even the supposedly legitimate ones.

The raids continued, and even escalated. In April of 1875, Nueces County sheriff John McClure appealed to Texas Adjutant General Steele for help, and Steele promptly sent the legendary Captain Leander H. McNelly of the newly reconstituted Texas Rangers with a Special Company of forty men to the region. McNelly was a great captain. Just 31 years old, he had been a partisan soldier for the Confederacy as a teenager. Blunt, outspoken, and incorruptible, he had been seriously wounded in battle with outlaws. He was " ... a tallish man of quiet manner, and with the soft voice of a timid Methodist minister"[41] McNelly rode into the triangle in May of 1875, to find opposing armed bands of Americans and Mexicans on the verge of potential civil war. He wrote the Adjutant General that " ... acts committed by Americans are horrible to relate; ... ranches ... plundered and burned ... the people murdered or driven away." He ordered both groups to disband. The reputation of the Rangers and of their captain was such that these orders were instantly obeyed. But McNelly also knew the source from whence trouble flowed. He rode on to the Rio Grande at Hidalgo, then to Brownsville, where he found much alarm.[42] Setting up an intelligence network he learned that a ship stood off the little port of Bagdad on the Mexican side of the river, where Cortina personally was awaiting delivery of an order of beef for Cuba to be filled by his *vaquero* raiders operating on the American side.[43]

McNelly planned to ambush the raiding party. He was empowered to kill any rustler caught north of the river, and to take no prisoners. He enlisted a Texas Mexican cowman named Jesús Sandoval, with a Brownsville boy, Tom Sullivan, as interpreter, to capture Cortina's spies, and by the simple device of a rope around their necks and tossed over a limb, he unfailingly extracted information as to the raiders' plans: a party of bandits were moving several hundred stolen cattle across the Palo Alto prairie near Loma Alta, a rise not far from Brownsville on the Point Isabel trail. The spy said that there were seventeen Mexicans and one "white man": Cortina's picked men. The ambush was a success. The ensuing

gun battle, starting in a coastal salt marsh, ended in the brush, where some bandits escaped, but twelve *Cortinistas* were left dead, along with one very young Ranger in his first action. The Rangers recovered twelve horses as well as guns and gear, plus 216 head of cattle bearing 34 different American brands. The cattle were returned to their owners.

The bodies were collected and carted by the Army to Brownsville, where they were dumped in a heap in the market plaza for all on both sides of the river to see how Rangers handled cattle thieves. There was enormous indignation in Matamoros along with dire threats of retribution from Cortina, which came to nothing.[44] I remember Tía Anita one time in the 1930s talking about "all the bodies in the square". It was just a passing remark, almost out of earshot, and I didn't realize what a story she could have told me. She would have been just eleven or twelve at the time of the battle.

Cattle theft in the Brownsville area effectively ended, but the raids had simply moved westward up the river. McNelly recovered some cattle eighty miles upriver from Brownsville. Some months later, in the fall of 1875, a new theft of some 200 cattle from Cameron County occurred. The escalation of raiding apparently led the determined Ranger Captain to believe that the only solution was to carry his campaign into Mexico.[45] If this action brought U.S. troops onto Mexican soil, in effect precipitating war, so be it. That might bring the ultimate solution.

What followed was a series of events bordering (no pun intended) on total confusion, involving the U.S. Army commands in Brownsville, Rio Grande City, and Edinburg, as well as the Texas Adjutant General in Austin and the War Department in Washington (all issuing conflicting orders and countermands), a large contingent of the Mexican army, backed by the Chief Justice of Tamaulipas, and the U.S. Consul at Matamoros. Of lesser moment in the expedition were two U.S. Army Gatling guns set up for cover from the American shore, but, to McNelly's relief, never fired.[46]

The various orders were selectively interpreted by McNelly as befitting his tactical situation of the moment. But McNelly himself, paradoxically for this cool, calculating leader, initiated the confusion by attacking the wrong *rancho*, half a mile away from Las Cuevas, his target, killing a number of innocent *paisanos* and blowing his surprise. Regrouping, the Rangers made contact in a brief, hot encounter in which the owner of Las Cuevas, the Mexican *ranchero* and major stolen beef trafficker General Juan Flores, was killed. After a day long exchange of desultory sniping in the chaparral, a large body of Mexican troops arrived with a white flag and communication from the Chief Justice of Tamaulipas. A parley was arranged, requesting that the Americans vacate Mexican soil. McNelly coolly refused to leave without all the stolen cattle that could be rounded up. More negotiations, intransigence, and confrontations ensued. U.S. officers in Brownsville, San Antonio, Austin, and Washington, D.C. all denied requests for military support. The U.S. Consul at Matamoros, as representative of the State Department, advised him to surrender to "Mexican Federal Authorities," promising that an American agent would stay with him for his protection.

McNelly "couldn't see it," and, at the head of his twenty-five volunteers, advised the Mexicans in front of him, who numbered at least 400, "that unless they accepted my proposition to deliver such cattle and thieves as they had on hand ... that I would at once make an advance." The Mexicans capitulated, and agreed to all his terms, and the Rangers peacefully withdrew to Texas. But there was more foot dragging and more face-saving demands from Mexico, and a final ultimatum with cocked guns from McNelly, now back on the Mexican shore with ten volunteers. As one of the Rangers put it, "If you ever saw cattle put across the river in a hurry, those Mexicans did it." McNelly got back the only stolen cattle ever returned to the Texas side.

Although the Rangers had apparently put a halt to wholesale cattle theft in the Valley, some cattle theft continued. Not until early 1877 did President Rutherford Hayes direct the Secretary

of War to inform General William T. Sherman, commanding the Army, that "in case the lawless incursions continue ... he (General Ord, commanding the Department of Texas) will be at liberty ... when in pursuit of the marauders ... to follow them across the Rio Grande, and to overtake and punish them, as well as retake stolen property taken from our citizens and found in their hands on the Mexican side of the line ... [and that] the invasion of our territory by armed and organized thieves to prey upon our citizens should not be longer endured."[47]

But Washington's view that the solution was more political than military proved true. The real problem was governmental chaos in Mexico.[48] In the northern Mexican states, so far from the capital, there was a virtual absence of government. Rules and, indeed, laws were made on an ad hoc basis to suit the convenience of local officials such as Cortina and Flores, who were, as we have seen, themselves the instigators and profiteers of international crime. In 1858, the governor of Tamaulipas, in violation of the Mexican Constitution, established a zone six miles wide along the entire length of the Tamaulipas bank of the Rio Grande as a free zone into which stolen cattle could be "imported" duty free and therefore without any official notice of arrival or ownership. In another example, on one occasion Cortina entered a border town and hanged the *alcalde* and another man for interfering with the crossing of stolen cattle.[49]

A New Day Dawns with Don Porfirio

By the early 1870s, the vacuum of governance in the border states was percolating a broth of revolutionary movements. One of the most promising was forming around one of the greatest heroes of the Mexican wars against the French Imperialism in 1862, José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz, who had taken refuge in Brownsville for a brief period in 1876 following an abortive revolutionary effort. During his stay in Brownsville, he had conferred with and gained support, political, strategic and financial, from the leading landowners, merchants and political leaders of the Texas

Rio Grande. Though these men are not named in our sources, it is reasonable to expect that Albert, and perhaps others of the Champions, and the Solís with their Mexican connections, were part of this group. Díaz understood well Mexico's need for good relations with its colossal neighbor. As he put it, "Mexico is too far from God and too close to the United States." In April of 1876, Díaz crossed to Matamoros and began his ascendancy to a strong presidency, described as Mexico's golden age.[50]

Don Porfirio did not forget his Texas American friends. He was to make Mexico's first real effort to keep the peace on the border by armed force. A Texas rancher said that it was General Ramón Treviño, governor of Nuevo León under Díaz, who "more than any other man below the Rio Grande was responsible for quelling the *bandidos*."[51] The rascally Cortina sought cover by declaring for the new President, but Díaz was not taken in. He arrested Cortina, and ordered him shot. In a bizarre twist, whether or not by Cheno's master gambit, his life was spared by the intervention of an old Texas Ranger adversary, Rip Ford. Díaz placed the now wealthy, murderous old thief under house arrest in the City of Mexico, where he could be watched and rendered harmless, to live in comfort until his death in 1892.[52]

Beginning in the 1880s, the beef cattle industry saw significant changes. The cattle drives ended with the introduction of barbed wire fences and railroads into central and western Texas, where British and Scottish ranching interests controlled 15 to 20 million acres of land. Rails from the north would not come to the Rio Grande Valley until 1904. In the mid 1880s, drought, bitter winters and rustling took their toll, along with plummeting cattle prices. Much of the British land was sold off in small parcels for crop farming.[53] A number of the ranchers in the "triangle" sold out or turned to other enterprises. Mifflin Kenedy turned the management of his ranching operations over to his son, John, and invested in railroads. However, Richard King, the dedicated cattleman who had created an empire and a dynasty, remained active in ranching until his death in 1885.

The Champion Stage Mail Line made its last run in 1873 with the inauguration of the Rio Grande Railway Company's service between Brownsville and Point Isabel, but Albert, age 69 in 1885, continued merchandising activities and managing his ranches until his death on September 20, 1890. Over the years, he was active in civic affairs, holding the appointive office of road commissioner for District No.1 for many years, and being appointed pilot commissioner for the Brazos Santiago port by Governor Davis in 1873.[54]

A Quest for Restitution: The Cattle Claims

By early 1872, the losses of Texas stock raisers and the state of siege under which they lived had finally gotten the attention of Washington. Under a joint resolution of Congress approved by President Grant, a United States Commission (which came to be known as the Robb Commission) arrived on the Rio Grande in July of 1872. From July 30 to October 3 the commisioners took formal depositions and recorded sworn testimony from hundreds of eyewitnesses and property owners of the losses and outrages suffered by American citizens. Their report was submitted to Congress, but nothing was done about it. In 1875, a permanent committee of Brownsville citizens prepared and printed an exhaustive account of the depredations of Mexican bandits. A Congressional Committee of the 44th Congress in 1876 drew up an even longer list of specific murders, burnings, losses and thefts. At the time, the reports brought no comfort and little direct aid.[55]

In 1879, hundreds of ranchers and stockmen of the Texas triangle, including Albert Champion, filed a total of 462 claims against the Government of Mexico in the amount of $53,275,890.50, based largely on the findings by the Robb Commission of responsibility of the Mexican Government under international law.

In computing losses in an individual case, the American Agent adopted the following method:

> The losses ... have been computed by taking the number of cattle belonging to each ... (claimant)

> ... at the time the raids began, 1868, by adding the normal increase of the herds as established by indisputable authority ... by deducting therefrom the number of cattle sold and the normal losses through natural causes, thus leaving the approximate ... losses from the one known extraordinary cause.

The "normal increase" of cattle referred to is taken at 33 1/3 percent per annum. The cattle for which the claim is made are valued at $10.00 per head. According to the American Agent, Mexico was liable for all livestock determined as missing as the result of the above-mentioned method of computation.[56]

A history of payments of international claims affords little comfort for even the most dedicated optimists. What actually took place, if anything, in 1879 is not clear. Forty-four years later, "these claims were filed with the General Claims Commission, United States and Mexico, established under the Convention of 1923, which made no determination of them."[57] After eleven more years, under the General Claims Protocol of April 24, 1934, Honorable Oscar W. Underwood Jr., the American Commissioner designated under that Protocol, made an appraisal of them. The vast majority of them were found by him to be entitled to "no award" upon the ground that there was no showing of "complicity or negligence on the part of Mexican authorities."[58] Finally, the last commission was established under the optimistic title of the Settlement of Mexican Claims Act of 1942:

TEXAS CATTLE CLAIMS

General Memorandum Opinion of the American Mexican Claims Commission, Established Pursuant to the Settlement of Mexican Claims Act of 1942[59]

Following are excerpts of the findings and conclusions of the Robb Commission, as well as findings of the subsequent commissions up to the terms of final settlement in 1944:

Nature of Record: A very large quantity of material was filed in Docket No.1599 et al. The memorial covers 49 volumes, the Mexican answer 1 volume, the American brief 6 volumes, and the Mexican reply brief 6 volumes.

Grand Juries: On March 25, 1873, the Federal Grand Jury of the Eastern District of the State of Texas stated, in part:

> ... a depredatory war has existed ... since1865 ... waged by men organized in Mexico, by Mexican soldiers acting under the orders of a Mexican general and commanded directly by officers of the Mexican army; that the authorities of Mexico, civil and military, have countenanced, aided and supported these hostile operations ...

Mexican Officials: Testifying before the (Robb) Commission in 1872, General McCook (U.S. Military Commander on the Rio Grande) stated:

> General Miguel Palacios, (Commanding the Plaza of Matamoros) told me in an official interview ... at my quarters that he had seen General Cortina's soldiers in uniform driving cattle bearing Texas brands on the public highroads of Mexico ...

American Consul: The American consul at Matamoros, Thomas F. Wilson, testified before the Robb Commission vis-a-vis Palacios and Cortina:

> ... that as commander of the federal forces of the City of Matamoros, he (Palacios) was powerless to prevent these crimes, as long as General Cortina commanded the border outside; that he was ashamed to acknowledge that the Mexican government had sent the chief of thieves and bandits on the frontier, and that he had represented the state of affairs to his government and would transmit my (Wilson's)

> letter with its list of ... Inditements (sic) against ... Cortina ... for murder and robbery ... that he had given an account of the facts to the Supreme Government of the Republic ... In a dispatch of March 21, 1874, the ... consul reported to the Department of State as follows: ... as Col. Cristo, the Military Commander of this city is a partizan (sic) and friend of General Cortina ... reported that he could not act in opposition to ... Cortina, as it would more than likely cost him his life to do so, it seemed to me ... that nothing could be gained by sending Col. Meriam's letter to either of these authorities ...

Measures by the United States: With respect to the contention that the United States should have taken measures to prevent losses arising from raids from Mexico, it may first be pointed out that the Mexican Government had no right to impose this additional burden upon the Government of the United States. Moreover, in order to combat the raids, American forces had to have permission from the Mexican Government to pursue the raiders into Mexico. Such permission was not granted ...

> Under the Settlement of Mexican Claims Act in 1942 the Commission was authorized to "review appraisals in claims wherein ... a great number of petitions have been filed ... praying for a review of said appraisals. The general contention made by the claimants therein is that Commissioner Underwood erred in requiring, in each claim, proof of "complicity or negligence on the part of Mexican Authorities", strong insistence being made by them that international liability ... is sufficiently imputed to the Mexican Government from the facts relating to the raids in question.[60]

Commission's Comments: (Re: Preceding paragraph) The position of Commissioner Underwood that each claimant must prove that "in his individual case the Mexican Government could have controlled the raiders or could have punished them through its usual means of repression" was not accepted by the Settlement Commission, which held that:

> It appearing ... that the raids were systematic and continuous and not isolated sporadic incidents; that they were openly and notoriously organized in Mexico; that the Mexican authorities failed to take steps to prevent them or to prevent in Mexico the open traffic in stolen Texas livestock; that on the contrary, high Mexican military officials and other officials were implicated in such raids and were profiting therefrom; and that, although the Mexican Government was aware of this condition of affairs and of the nature of the action necessary to put an end to this condition, it neglected, for a period of years to take the necessary action, it seems clear that the raids ... were made possible by the conduct of the Mexican Government. Each raid was not an isolated raid but was part of a general lawless condition which, throughout said period, was permanent and ... was made possible by the action of the Mexican authorities. It follows, therefore, in the opinion of this commission, that, if a claimant proves that his losses were caused by a raid or raids from Mexico during the period in question he will thereby have established liability on the part of the Mexican Government for the same.[61]

Legal Precedents: This section cites references from various international law texts, with a discussion of their application to the Mexican depredations.

General Principles and Requirements: ... the following ... principles ... and requirements as to proof will be applied by the Commission in determining the merits of individual claims: (excerpted)

1. American citizenship of claimants and predecessors (give proof).
2. Prove liability of the Mexican Government applies.
3. Evidence must be produced that the loss of livestock was the proximate result of a raid or raids from Mexico.
4. Evidence ... of claimant's cattle in Mexico ... is a basis for award ... only (with) proof that the presence of cattle ... is attributable to raid or raids from Mexico.
5. *Claims or parts of claims for losses of prospective increase of livestock will not be allowed.* (Italics supplied)
6. Interest will be allowed from January 1, 1879.

Done at Washington, D. C., December 30, 1944.

The Life Story of an International Cattle Claim

A joke in the Champion family was that the increase in Albert Champion's heirs – he had seven children, and his first two children added a total of twenty-one – had outstripped the prospective increase in his stock. Of course point 5 of the "principles" made the question moot.

In 1935, faint tremors from Washington indicated a possibility of action, and my parents, Lucile Champion Murphy, granddaughter and direct heir of Albert, and Edward A. Murphy, computed the amount of the claim with simple interest of 6 % per annum at approximately $440,000.00. As my father wrote, "Your mother and I never did have any hope of sharing in a sum like that, but we did consider it worth while to file a claim." They did so in Lucile's name with her three unmarried aunts, Euphemia, Rosa, and Anita – Albert's daughters – joining her as equal claimants; the others in the family did not consider there was any chance and would do nothing.

In 1945, our father wrote another letter, this one addressed to my sister and me and to the widow of our brother Edward, who had been killed in WWII. Mother had died, too young, in 1936. The letter reads:

> Dear Ones,
>
> Re: Claim of Albert Champion before the American-Mexican Claims
>
> Commission.
>
> This old claim has taken on a possible new lease on life and chance to get something. About a year ago there was an announcement by the commission that a finding in favor of this claim had been made and that $580 had been allowed, but if the same was not satisfactory that new evidence might be submitted. ... Another thing, the award that was made –the $580—would be paid 30% in cash and the balance over a long period of years, so we (four heirs of Albert) would receive a combined claim under that award of ¼ of $580, or $145 each share, and 30% to the four of us (Lucile's heirs) would be $43.50 (again to be divided 4 ways $10.87ea.) ... so I decided to try to open it up and endeavor to get more ... I wrote to a firm of lawyers in Washington ... I had a reply from them saying that they had gone over the files in the claim and believed that there was a chance of having the award materially increased and would ... take over on the basis of ... 50% of any award above the initial award of $580.00 ... we are not obligated in any way if they do not increase the award ... They have associated with them a man who for years was in the office of this claims commission and he should be conversant with the possibilities.

On October 15, 1946, a letter from Nugent & Nugent, Washington, D.C., stated:

> ... Claim of Albert Champion, Docket No. 235 ... Dear Mr. Murphy: I take pleasure in informing you that ... I believe a favorable decision will be handed down during ... the next sixty days. The American Mexican Claims Commissioners have been in session all summer and it is now quite apparent that their decisions in the pending old cattle claims will soon be announced. I can only hope that their decision in your claim will be in an amount acceptable to you and other claimants.

In January 27, 1947, father wrote:

> ... I had a letter from the Commission ... to the effect that (they) had allowed a settlement of (the Albert Champion Claim) ... of $5,744 together with simple interest at 6 % from January 1, 1879 to date.

While we don't have numbers for the total payment made by the Mexican Government nor the dollar amount of all claims filed, such figures as I have seen would indicate the settlement was essentially proportional, in scale. But then, typical of the history of claim settlements and bequests, our previously indifferent heirs and devisees emerged in numbers; the anticipated four slices of Albert's pie, modest as it was, had become, after probate in Cameron County Court, twenty-three. After the Washington firm's 50% and probate costs, the balance to be apportioned came to the handsome sum of $1,913.20. The original four, plus two other direct heirs, received $256.23 each; one received $119.57; ten received $23.29 each; one received $7.78 and five each received $3.11. Cheno and his *compadres* would have had a good laugh.[62]

Endnotes

1 T.R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, p. 554.

2 David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, p. 194.

3 J.Frank Dobie, *The Longhorns*, p.3.

4 Fehrenbach, p.75.

5 Virginia H. Taylor, *Index to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, (Austin,1976).

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Paul Horgan, *Great River*, p. 346.

9 Fehrenbach, p. 78.

10 A.A.Champion, "A Short Synopsis of the Solís Family."

11 Milo Kearney, "De La Garzas, Ballís, and the Political History of the Region that would later become Cameron County," in Milo Kearney (Ed.), *More Studies in Brownsville History* (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), p. 42.

12 Paul Horgan, p. 702.

13 A.A. Champion, "The Champions, Part One."

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Tom Lea, *The King Ranch*, p. 8.

20 A.A. Champion, "The Miller Hotel in the Antebellum Period", in Milo Kearney (Ed.), *More Studies in Brownsville History* (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), pp.163-165.

21 A.A. Champion, "Albert Champion."

22 Fehrenbach, pp.510, 511.

23 Ibid, p. 511.

24 Ibid. p. 512.

25 Ibid. p. 513.

26 A.A. Champion, "Albert Champion."

27 Fehrenbach, pp. 513-514.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid, pp. 520, 521.

31 A.A.Champion, "Albert Champion."

32 Ibid.

33 Fehrenbach, p. 555.

34 Dobie, "The Longhorns" pp. 85-86.

35 Fay E. Ward, "The Working Cowboy's Manual" p. 143.

36 Fehrenbach, pp. 571 and 572.

37 Ibid., p. 572.

38 Carl S. Chilton, Jr., *Fort Brown, The First Border Post*, p. 61.

39 Lea, p.277.

40 Carl S. Chilton, Jr., p. 59.

41 Fehrenbach, p. 576.

42 Ibid., 578.

43 Lea, p. 280.

44 Fehrenbach, pp. 578 and 579.

45 Ibid., p. 579.

46 Ibid., p. 581, 582 and 583.

47 Paul Horgan, p. 858.

48 Fehrenbach, p. 584.

49 Ibid., p. 573.

50 Ibid., p. 585 and *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1963 ed., vol.7, p. 370.

51 Paul Horgan, p. 859.

52 Fehrenbach, p. 585.

53 *The Texas Almanac*, 1988-1989, p. 389.

54 A.A.Champion, "Albert Champion."

55 Lea, pp. 272 and 276.

56 Texas Cattle Claims, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944, pp. 1 and 2; and the Champion-Murphy family papers.

57 Ibid., p. 1.

58 Ibid., p. 1.

59 Ibid., p. 1.

60 Ibid., p. 1.

61Ibid., pp. 17 and 18.

62 My mother, Lucile Elizabeth Champion, was the daughter of Frank Champion and grand-daughter of Albert Champion and Estefania Solis Champion, and of Dr. A.L. Edwards and Elizabeth Dupree Edwards. Elizabeth Dupree was a descendant of one of the many French Huguenot families who settled in the Macon, Georgia area. The Edwards family came to South Texas from Macon in the aftermath of the Civil War. Mother was born on February 25, 1889, to Frank and Henrietta Elizabeth Edwards Champion, in Mier, Mexico, where Henrietta's father, Dr. Edwards, was the American Consular Agent. Dr. Edwards delivered his daughter's second child in that dusty but historic little border town. There had been a brother, earlier, who died on the day of his birth, and when Lucile was five, in Brownsville, she lost her thirty-one year old mother and two year old sister to typhoid fever. Lucile grew up in Brownsville surrounded by cousins, not "by the dozens" but literally by the hundreds; the original five Champion-Solis marriages had produced 37 offspring, and each of the 37 brought forth families of from one (Lucile) up to as many as seventeen. Her education was begun at the Incarnate Word convent school in Brownsville and completed at Nazareth Academy in Bardstown, Kentucky in 1910.

In 1916 President Wilson ordered a mobilization of troops to the Mexican border. Posted to the Brownsville area were a number of National Guard regiments from eastern and middle-western states. Regimental Adjutant of the 1st Iowa Infantry was Captain Edward A. Murphy, a newspaper man from Vinton, Iowa. It seems that the Guard units had hardly time to set up camp before there was under way an almost incessant round of dances and social events, and by the end of November Lucile and Edward were engaged. Their wedding took place in the Champion home in April, 1917. There were three children: Edward Andrews, Jr., born in 1917, Frank Champion, born 1920, and Elizabeth Louise, born 1923. Lucile died at age 47 in 1936. Edward's plane was shot down in the Pacific in 1943. He left a wife, Betts, and an unborn son, Edward III. Frank and his wife, Evelyn, living in Wheaton, Illinois, have two children. Elizabeth (Betty) and her husband, Bill White, living in Pensacola, Florida, have two children, William Jr. and Elizabeth White Pope.

Two Shots in the Dark: The Murder of Michael Schodts

by

Bill Young

By all accounts, Belgian native Michael Schodts was one of the most prominent businessmen of the dusty border town of Brownsville in the nineteenth century. Born in Antwerp, Belgium, on May 30, 1836, Schodts had come in 1862 to Matamoros, where he met, and later married, Susan Díaz. The couple had a daughter, who was left motherless at three, when Susan Díaz Schodts died. After his wife's death, Schodts and little María Isabel Schodts, sometime in late 1865, moved to Brownsville, probably intending to continue the successful import business that he had established in Matamoros. Instead, Schodts went into the lumber business, with a yard at 11th and East Monroe Streets. Ads running in the *Brownsville Herald* read, "M. Schodts, Dealer in Lumber." Schodts prospered, expanded, branched out, and, over a 30-year period, made a name for himself.

In the 1890s, one of the most popular restaurants and watering holes in Brownsville was Jagou's, located on East Elizabeth Street.[1] It was here that Schodts and a cadre of his closest friends habitually met for a round of drinks, a meal, and, perhaps, a few hands of cards. So it was on February 28, 1896; Schodts sat with Adolph Bollack, a successful Brownsville merchant, and other members of his group.[2] During the evening, someone, no doubt, mentioned that 1896 was a leap year and they would enjoy an extra day on February 29. According to records at the National Weather Service, February 29, 1896, was warm, even for Brownsville, with the temperature reaching 92°.[3] Schodts, however, wouldn't be able to enjoy that warm February day.

According to the *Herald* of February 29, 1896,[4] Schodts was preparing to say goodnight to his companions when a stranger walked into Jagou's. As reported by the paper:

> A Mexican came into the saloon and asked for a package of cigarettes. The porter handed him a pack and informed him that they were worth ten cents. The man handed them back, saying, *"Muy caro."* He then walked to the rear and looked through the lattice partition at the party in the back room (Schodts's group). He left the saloon but returned in a short while and asked for a match and again walked back to the lattice, looking at those in the other room.

Witnesses later said that no one could remember seeing this stranger before that night. His identity would become a factor only after the events of that fateful evening played themselves out. It was a little before 10 o'clock on the night of February 28, 1896, that the circle broke up, and Schodts prepared for the familiar walk from Jagou's to his home on Washington Street near the entrance to the Fort Brown gate. The 59-year-old Schodts would never make it to the comfort and safety of his home. He got as far only as Washington and 11th Streets,[5] and there, just outside a barber shop, where he often stopped for haircuts and shaves, Schodts faced his killer and the final moments of his life.

"Two pistol shots," reported the *Herald*, "startled the citizens living near the corner of Washington and 11th Streets." Persons living nearby, along with Fred L. Hicks, J.D. Anderson, and I.D. Putegnat (the men Schodts had been visiting with at Jagou's) rushed to see what the matter was. What they discovered shocked and sickened them. "They found," said the *Herald*, "the body of Michael Schodts, dying, weltering in his life blood and already stiffening in death ... a bolder murder was perhaps never committed. [Right] in the heart of the city within half a block of police headquarters at the City Market."

"Michael Schodts went to his doom ... within a few yards of his own door [he] was shot in cold blood by the merciless hand of the assassin," the *Herald* elaborated. While there apparently were no eye witnesses to the shooting, there were some prominent Brownsville residents who were literally a stone's throw away from the scene and who heard the shots, which were mere seconds apart. One of these was L.W.R. Cowen, who the *Herald* said was leaving his mother's house when the first bullet "whistled past Mr. Cowen, going through the leaves of a tree in front of him."[6]

Brownsville physician Dr. C.B. Combe was reportedly the first to reach Schodts, and found Schodts "at his last gasp."[7] Combe examined the mortally wounded Schodts, and found two gunshot wounds, one to the left of his spinal column and between the shoulder blades, passing through the body. This was the bullet Cowen reportedly heard. The second bullet entered the left arm, near the shoulder and tracked downward and was later extracted near the entrance wound caused by the first shot. Combe suggested that the second wound was inflicted as Schodts turned, staggering, before he fell. Combe identified the murder weapon as a .44 pistol.

In this fashion, a prominent citizen and businessman, well liked and highly regarded by the people of Brownsville, was shot down in the shadows of a bright moon on a clear, cool night in February of 1896.[8] As the excitement of the deed died down, folks began to wonder who had done this, and why. Some reported seeing the assassin fleeing, "pistol in hand, down 11th Street towards the river, but none of these could say who it was that did the deed."[9] Then they began to put two and two together. Those who allegedly saw the shooter running away described him to Schodts's friends from Jagou's, and the man who tried to buy cigarettes and the shooter seemed to be one and the same.

This would-be purchaser of ten-cent cigarettes is known to have peered in at Schodts and his friends two different times as they sat in the back room at Jagou's. After the second time, he was reported

crossing Elizabeth Street in front of Bloomberg & Rafael's store, opposite the saloon. According to the report on the murder in the Leap Year *Herald* for February 29, the porter who told the man that the cigarettes he wanted were ten cents a pack said he had never seen the buyer before, but that "he was a strange Mexican, rather short in stature, heavy built, apparently of middle age and wore dark trousers with a striped, coffee-colored sack coat and soft hat." "This man," speculated the *Herald*, "it is supposed, was the murderer."[10] There is some justification for this presumption, because Schodts' friends Hicks and Anderson both said the shooter looked like the man who came into Jagou's and was wearing similar clothing. This same man was seen to "disappear in the cane brake near the river."

In what turned out to be a futile effort, police were stationed on the river bank, but the murderer had already made good his escape to the safety of Matamoros. Mexican police reportedly were notified, and were asked to be on the lookout for the fugitive, and one arrest was said to have been made there, but nothing ever came of it.

Not only do we not know who killed Michael Schodts, but we do not know why he was killed. Law enforcement, 1896 style, was not equipped to deal with murders such as that of Michael Schodts. If the shooter did, in fact, succeed in crossing the Rio Grande to Mexico he was certainly safe. If anyone in Brownsville knew the name of the murderer, it was kept secret, and that secret has been unbroken for more than a century. Today there are several buildings in Brownsville that would be easily recognized by those involved in the Schodts affair. The shadows they cast today are the same shadows cast upon the men who gathered at Jagou's and who made that grisly discovery on the streets of the city, but for the most part these men would be lost in the modern city Brownsville has become. There is no trace of Schodts's lumber yard on Monroe Street. What Schodts would find its place if he came back is a varied array of buildings: some residences and some small businesses.

Michael Schodts lies where he has lain for the past 110 years: in Lot 9, Block 47 of the Old Brownsville City Cemetery, where he was placed on February 29, 1896.[11] The *Herald* reported that the "remains were encased in a handsome metallic casket, which was covered with handsome floral tributes. The cortege was one of the largest and most imposing seen in Brownsville."[12]

Endnotes

1 Robert Vezzetti, *Brownsville Historical Association Newsletter, pp 1-2, July-August, 1988.*

2 Robert Vezzetti, *Brownsville Historical Association Newsletter, pp 1-2, July-August, 1988.*

3 Official Records, *National Weather Service, Brownsville, Texas February 28-29, 1896.*

4 *The Brownsville Herald,* February 29, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 196, p. 2.

5 *The Brownsville Herald,* February 29, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 196, p. 2.

6 *The Brownsville Herald,* February 29, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 196, p. 2.

7 *The Brownsville Herald,* February 29, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 196, p. 2.

8 Official Records, *National Weather Service, Brownsville, Texas February 28-29, 1896.*

9 *The Brownsville Herald,* February 29, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 196, p. 2.

10 *The Brownsville Herald,* February 29, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 196, p. 2.

11 *Record of Interments in the City Cemetery of Brownsville, Texas,* Vol. III, 1891-1900, Sam and Chula T. Griffin, p. 40.

12 *The Brownsville Herald,* February 29, 1896, Vol. IV, No. 196, p. 2.

The Life and Times of Robert Kane: Miner, Soldier, Fireman, Barber and Family Man

by

Don Clifford

This story is about Robert Kane, an ordinary man who lived during extraordinary times. He was a soldier. He supported a wife and three daughters, one of whom was mentally handicapped, on a soldier's pay. He did not amass a great fortune with which to endow libraries or build monuments memorializing his name. You will not find his name in any history textbook, yet the units to which he was assigned helped tame the Western Frontier. Perhaps his only claim to fame is the dubious distinction of being one of the relatively few casualties of the Spanish-American War. A six-inch square block of marble 30 inches long with a number engraved on top marks his final resting place in Arlington National Cemetery. The marker is indistinguishable from 100 or so other similar blocks of marble. Only God knows which one is his. The family's roots were in Brownsville, Texas ... but we're getting ahead of our story.

When The West Was Young

Robert Kane was born on July 31, 1845, in the mountainous coal mining town of Pottsville, Pennsylvania. He was the son of Scottish immigrant George Kane and Annie Kitchens. He probably had an older brother named George and two sisters named Ann and Mary. According to family legend, George Kane came from a town in Scotland on a river whose name begins with a "C." As of this writing, none of Kane's descendants have discovered the location of this area, nor is it known if the river mentioned is the noted River Clyde.

The documentary evidence of Robert Kane's date of birth and birthplace is twofold and conflicting. One instance is a penned notation in the back of his Soldier's Handbook, written half a century later. The other is his age as written in his Army enlistment

and discharge papers, which imply a birth date of 1851 - six years younger. Schuylkill County birth records go back only to 1899, and the Federal Census for 1850, 1860, and 1870 list several Robert Kanes, but which one is he is undetermined.

When hard anthracite coal was discovered in the vicinity, Pottsville became a boomtown supplying the coal and ore resources that fueled the burgeoning Industrial Revolution in the United States. The probabilities are good that Kane spent his late childhood years working in the mines, as child labor laws to protect children were not yet imported from Europe. The town was also a rallying point for the "Molly Maguires," a secret miners society whose aim was to improve the miner's lot, often with violent methods. Later, after Kane left Pottsville, a trial in 1877 resulted in six hangings and numerous prison sentences for suspected society members.

By the time Kane was born, the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad provided low cost transportation from the Schuylkill and Mahoney anthracite coalfields in eastern Pennsylvania to Philadelphia. The railroad combined with a coal and iron company and attempted to dominate the entire anthracite trade. They would eventually go bankrupt in 1880 because of the enormous debt the company incurred trying to eliminate the competition. For Kane, though, it was just a simple train ride on the Reading from Pottsville to where, family legend states, he worked in the coalmines around Philadelphia.

The City of Brotherly Love had its own bituminous coal fields and access to other coal and ore resources. The city developed its iron industry early on which later shifted to Pittsburgh. After the U.S. Civil War, industrial expansion became the norm, and the coal, steel and railroad barons began pushing rail lines westward. Ahead of the rail lines, the pioneer settlers pushed and displaced the Indians from their ancestral homelands. On May 10, 1869, a significant event happened that threw the western frontier into greater turmoil. At Promontory Point, Utah, the last spike – a golden one – was pounded into a railroad tie that completed the first transcontinental

link between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. At long last, East met West, and against a backdrop of massive speculation and expansion, Robert Kane decided to join the Army.

We don't know what motivated him ... perhaps he saw the opportunity for a way of life above ground instead of below. On June 14, 1873, Kane left the coalfields forever and enlisted in the Army of the United States for a period of five years. His enlistment record states he was twenty-two, which means a birth year of 1851 instead of 1845 as recorded in his Soldier's Handbook. The enlistment record also indicates he had blue eyes, light brown hair, ruddy complexion and stood 5 feet 6 inches tall. He was assigned to Troop I, 8th US Cavalry as a Trumpeter.

The Eighth Cavalry, and three other cavalry regiments, were organized in 1866 with the specific mission to help maintain the peace in the Western territories. The regimental headquarters and various elements of the 8th were scattered from California to Kansas and from the Dakotas to Texas. During the year 1867, Troops B, I, K and L, had been sent to posts in Arizona, and the other troops of the regiment remained separated at posts in Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, California, and Arizona, until 1870, when ordered to New Mexico. Several troops took stations at Forts Union, Craig, Selden, Wingate, Bascom, Stanton, in New Mexico, and Fort Garland, in Colorado Territory. The duties during this period were of almost continuous field service scouting after Indian predators, furnishing guards, providing escorts and other mundane services.

Kane's military record does not indicate where he joined his troop in 1873. It was probably in Arizona. In July 1875, the regiment marched to Texas, with the headquarters element taking its station at Fort Clark, January 8, 1876. Between 1875 and 1888, the troops at different times were stationed at posts and camps from Fort Brown, near the mouth of the Rio Grande, to Fort Hancock near El Paso.

Family legend states that Kane traveled to Fort Brown with "Old Man Burgath." The significance of this oft-repeated statement

by Kane's daughter, Julia, many years later, was missed until it was realized she may have been talking about Sgt. Bourjett, 8th Infantry, who had campaigned with General Zachary Taylor during the Seminole Wars in Florida and the Mexican-American War in South Texas. By the time Taylor's army occupied Corpus Christi, Bourjette had married Sarah Knight/Bowman, a woman of questionable character but with unswerving loyalty to Taylor's army. He was the second of several "husbands".

Sarah was a camp follower allowed to accompany a husband as a cook, nurse, or a laundress. She was the "Heroine of Fort Brown" who helped rally the defenders bombarded by Mexican artillery from across the Rio Grande River until rescued by Taylor. But Sarah was better known as the "Great Western" because she reminded a soldier of the biggest steamer of the time – a British ship with twin smokestacks named *The Great Western*. A stunning, good-looking woman, her hourglass figure stood more than six feet tall and weighed more than 200 pounds. She accompanied Taylor's army from Florida to Monterrey and opened "bawdy houses" along the way. Her first love was the army. If one husband was killed or separated, she would "marry" another in order to stay with the troops. She opened El Paso's first bordello, later sold out and moved to Yuma. On December 23, 1866 she died from a tarantula spider bite, following which she was buried with full military honors. With the telling and re-telling of this popular story, her married name was garbled into Burdette, Bourget, or Bourgotte.

History lost track of Bourjette after he arrived at Point Isabel, where Taylor set up his main supply base. However, the movements of the 8th Infantry are recorded, and after the Mexican and the U.S. Civil Wars, the regiment companies were stationed throughout the Southwest with their cavalry counterparts. Assuming Kane did meet him, Bourjette would have been an "Old Man" in his sixties, provided he survived both wars and any subsequent battles with the Indians.

After the War of Rebellion, the Army had only 10,000 regulars to patrol and provide protection for settlers migrating west and to assist reconstruction in the South. The country needed a larger "peacetime" army and had to do something with the Black soldiers that served the Union. Thus came about the era of the "Buffalo Soldiers" who were posted away from areas of civilization to avoid racial conflicts. Considering that Texas was a strong Confederate state, it was odd that so many Black soldiers were posted along the Mexican-American border, including Fort Brown.

The long and thin Blue Line stretched across the entire country west of the Mississippi to maintain the peace but only the cavalry troops proved effective against the Indians. Infantry units lacked mobility and usually provided garrison protection and support for the cavalry, or intervened in civil disputes that impacted the relationship of a frontier post with a rowdy frontier town.

During the ten years from 1877 to 1887 Kane's regiment, along with the 10th Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers, concentrated operations out of Fort Concho, Texas, and positioned various companies along the Rio Grande River at Forts Clark, Duncan, McIntosh and Ringgold Barracks. Frequent sorties after cattle thieves and smugglers were common. Political unrest in Mexico required a watchful eye on events happening south of the border. For instance, in 1876, Porfirio Diaz, with the help of many influential Brownsville citizens, launched his move for the presidency of Mexico. Twice he succeeded in acquiring the reins of government and for 31 years he ruled the country with an iron hand until he was forced to resign in 1911.

On June 4, 1878 Kane was discharged from the Army. He stayed a civilian for three weeks and then re-enlisted for five more years on June 25, 1878. The Federal Census of 1880 Brownsville lists Robert Kane, single, age 29, soldier. Further to the west the campaign against the Warm Spring Apaches, known as the "Victorio War" ended and a period of relative peace settled over the Texas-Mexico border.

On November 4, 1881, Kane was promoted to Sergeant, I Troop, 8th Cavalry. The record is not clear if he went to regimental headquarters at Fort Clark to receive the promotion or whether just the paper work went to Fort Clark to be countersigned by the regimental commander. Regardless, with his new pay status he could afford to get married. Where and when he met his bride, Eugenia Rodriguez, is unknown. The same 1880 Census lists Eugenia as a sister-in-law and member of the Quernio Salazar family. She was age 19. On December 29, 1882 they applied for a marriage license at the Cameron County Court House, and were married on New Year's Day 1883. The Cameron County Marriage Records, Book F, lists the event as the first marriage of the year.

A mystery and a lot of unanswered questions surround Eugenia Rodriguez, who was born March 23, 1862, on the Orive Ranch in eastern Cameron County, Texas. According to Julia Kane Finkelstein, who told the story of Eugenia's origins, it was in the summer of 1867 that Eugenia lost her mother in the great Yellow Fever epidemic. A few months later, she lost her father, captain of the *Bessie,* who was swept out to sea during the hurricane of October that same year. Five-year-old Eugenia and two other little girls, Adelita and Tomasita, also orphaned by the storm, were rescued and raised as sisters in the Frank and Domiana Rodriguez family. Adelita would later marry Joe Lavios and Tomasita married J.I.P. Franklin. The names of Eugenia's biological father and mother are lost, and it is here that the story becomes confusing.

The captain of the *Bessie* was Jesse S. Thornham, Jr., stepson of William Kelly, who owned the little river steamer. The *Bessie* was never swept out to sea and continued to ply up and down the Rio Grande at the turn of the 20th Century. A boat named the *Paisano* was lost during the October hurricane and its captain was Jesse S. Thornham, Sr. Some two years later, Kelly married the widow Mary Ann (Gallagher) Thornham on May 19, 1870, which accounts for Jessie Jr's connection with the *Bessie.*

To muddy the waters further, Geraldine Kelly, William Kelly's daughter, in later years described the *Paisano* as a four masted schooner while a contemporary newspaper article related the discovery of a sunken vessel with a mast too thin to be a sailboat but believed to be the "ill-fated steamer *Paisano.*" Attempts to find documentary references to the *Paisano* and her crew have been unsuccessful.

It's interesting that the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Eugenia's biological parents have survived but not their names. Even more interesting, Adelita and Tomasita tell the same basic story about their origins. Those who may have known all the facts have long since taken their knowledge with them to the grave. Perhaps this was the mystique that brought Kane and Eugenia together. Also, perhaps, "Annie", Kane's familiar name for Eugenia, talked him out of further military service. A baby was due, and a father needed to be at home instead of chasing around after a bunch of Indians. On June 24, 1883, the Army discharged Kane, terminating ten years of continuous service with an "excellent non-commissioned officer" endorsement. This time, Kane did not re-enlist but went to work for the National Railroad of Mexico, whose headquarters were located in the old Yturria building at Sixth and Abasolo Streets in Matamoros. The narrow gauge railroad ran a distance of 75 miles from Matamoros to San Miguel hauling passengers, "... hides, wool, bones sugar-cane, frijoles, hair and firewood."

On September 21, 1883, the Kane's first child, Olivia, was born. Her Godparents were Frank Filbert and Pauline De La Rosa White. Tragedy enveloped Olivia as an infant. The details are clear no longer, but apparently she fell out of a swing and injured her head. She spent the rest of her long life playing with dolls as though she were a four or five year old. On January 28, 1885, Julia Kane was born. She was baptized in Brownsville's Immaculate Conception Church, May 4, 1885. The Reverend P.F. Parisot OMI performed the rite witnessed by Michael Leahy and Maggie G. Latimer. By then Kane had already decided to leave the railroad. On February

18, officials of the Mexican National Railroad wrote for Kane a character reference letter:

> To whom it may concern,
>
> This is to certify that Robert Kane has been in the Company's employ the last two years and nine months as Brakeman and Fireman. I always found him attentive, trustworthy, obliging and (of) sober habits. I have no hesitation in stating that he will give satisfaction to any one who may employ him. He has left our employ on his own account in view of bettering himself.

The letter is signed by Samuel D. Trimbath, Master Mechanic, and endorsed by W.W. Mayberry, Assistant Superintendent, Mexican National Railway Company, Matamoras (sic), Mexico. Apparently, Kane had enough of braking cars and stoking engine boiler furnaces with heavy dense mesquite wood. The irony is his job might have been easier if coal had been available.

On March 2, 1885, Kane "bettered himself" by enlisting in the army. Because of the time gap since his former military service, he re-enlisted as a Private and was assigned to Company D, 16th Infantry at Fort McIntosh, Laredo. Now that Kane was a married family man, perhaps the Army posted him with an infantry unit instead of his former cavalry troop. Compared with a cavalry troop, an infantry unit led a relatively boring life. There were no daring chases across the wilderness or last minute rescues of besieged wagon trains. Regardless, Kane apparently proved his worth because before the year had ended, on November 1, 1885, he wore sergeant's chevrons once again. He would stay with the 16th for the rest of his life.

The 16th Infantry had served in the South as part of the army of occupation until 1877, when it was called to participate in the Indian campaigns. Westward expansion had caused friction and conflict with the Indians, so the 16th went west, serving briefly

at Fort Riley, Kansas where several companies served in the campaigns against the Ute and Cheyenne Nations. The regiment then moved down to Texas where it served in the campaigns against the Apaches and ultimately provided the guards to escort Geronimo into captivity at Fort Pickens, Florida.

By the time Kane joined the regiment in 1885, headquarters had relocated several times, notably to San Antonio, Fort McKavett and Fort Bliss. D and E Companies were already settled in at Fort McIntosh, but they would rotate temporary assignments at Fort Ringgold. Weapons' training was emphasized. On March 30, 1886, Kane was temporarily detached to San Antonio where he qualified as a Marksman with a rifle.

Also at this time, Laredo politics were heating up in typical inflammatory South Texas style. Two factions named the "Botas" (boots) and "Guaraches" (sandals) – one representing the "wealthy class" and the other, the not so fortunate – campaigned heatedly for political dominance and the county judge's seat. The *Handbook of Texas Online* reads:

> Most of the attention of that year (1884) centered around the race for county judge between (Jose Maria) Rodriguez and Juan V. Benavides, the son of Santos Benavides (who had served previously as county judge and as a colonel in the Confederate Army.) The constant flow of alcohol before the election, a cherished custom on the border, led to several violent confrontations ... The election saw the usual accusations of illegal voting, including paying Mexican aliens to vote.

Rodriguez won the election and the Botas took four of the five county precincts. During the next two years political tension remained high in anticipation of the city election. In spite of the usual complaints of unqualified voters mixed with alcohol and itchy trigger fingers, the election on April 6, 1886 was relatively peaceful. The *Handbook of Texas Online* continues,

> Although the vote was close, the Botas won. In their celebration the following day, they paraded the streets of Laredo promising to bury a Guarache in effigy. When the Guaraches attacked the Bota parade, one of the biggest gun battles in the history of the American West developed. As many as 250 men were involved in the fighting at one time or another. It took two companies of the Sixteenth United States Infantry and one company of the Eighth Cavalry to restore peace ...

History called this event the Laredo Election Riot in which sixteen to thirty people were killed and at least forty-five wounded. Kane's Company D was one of the two infantry companies available.

In May 1888, most of the 16th Infantry transferred to Fort Douglas, Utah, including Company D. The regiment's full complement of soldiers was in place by August 25, 1891. The Kane family settled in. Annie became a teacher for children of the military families stationed at the fort. Kane purchased a barber's chair and during off-duty time gave haircuts. On October 28, 1888 Elizabeth was born. Her godparents were fellow soldier Michael Leahy and Dora Graff. On March 1st, 1890, Kane went through the process of discharge and re-enlistment for five more years. According to his military record he was 40 years old. Life was good but all was not peaceful on the plains. The regiment was about to participate in the so-called "Wounded Knee" campaign at the Pine Ridge Reservation in North Dakota. Elizabeth Arnett Fields writes in her work *The West 1865-1897*:

> The winter of 1889-1890 was particularly harsh and the Sioux Indians, confined to six small reservations in North and South Dakota, suffered miserably. Impoverished, hungry and sick, the Sioux needed only a foretelling of future bliss to spark them into a mass delusion. This rumor originated from a Paiute named Wovoka, who talked of a new world

> in which the Indians "would be reunited with dead friends and relatives in a blissful and eternal life, free of pain, sickness, want and death, free, above all, of white people." ... By working themselves into a trance through intense prayer and the physically exhausting "Ghost Dance," the Sioux supposedly were able to glimpse into this promised new world. Soon, the Ghost Dance Religion swept throughout the Sioux camps like a prairie fire ...

The religion was a strange mixture of Christianity and old Indian beliefs. To reach this new world of bliss inhabited only by Indians each had to dance the Ghost Dance and above all, "You must not fight," Wovoka pleaded. "Do no harm to anyone. Do right always." Most of the western reservation Indians heeded Wovoka's injunction and danced peacefully in joyous expectation. But among the Sioux, the plea for peace turned into a call to arms. Robert M. Utley wrote:

> Short Bull and Kicking Bear, the high priests of the new religion among the Sioux, prophesied the day of deliverance would be hastened if the obliteration of the whites were not left entirely to God and Wovoka.

They hastened it further by inventing the "ghost shirt" which would protect the wearer against the white man's bullets.

On November 15, 1890, settlers and reservation officials wired to Washington a panic plea for help. Five days later, 600 soldiers consisting of five Buffalo Soldier Troops of the 9th Cavalry and eight companies of the 2nd and 8th Infantry appeared at the Pine Ridge and Rosebud agencies. Alarmed, the Sioux split into groups of "friendlies" and "hostiles". Some three thousand strong under Short Bull and Kicking Bear defied the military host and fled to the remote northwest corner of the Pine Ridge Reservation and holed up in a place called the Stronghold.

Meanwhile, disturbing events at the Standing Rock Agency contributed to the uneasy situation between Federal government forces and the rebel Indians. Brigadier General John R. Brooke ordered the arrest of two influential Sioux leaders, Sitting Bull and Big Foot, intending to prevent a similar situation from breaking out at other reservations. However, Sitting Bull's followers attempted to rescue him from the Indian police, and in the ensuing melee, Sitting Bull, six Sioux warriors and six Indian policemen were killed.

Hearing of the failed rescue, chiefs of the "friendlies" at Pine Ridge invited Big Foot to come and help restore the peace. The military was unaware of the invitation and assumed Big Foot and his band were to join the hostiles. On December 28, two 7th Cavalry Troops of the late General George Custer's old regiment caught up to Big Foot and escorted the entourage toward Pine Ridge. The rest of the 7th Cavalry met the advancing group at Wounded Knee Creek. The commander, Colonel James W. Forsythe, posted his men all round the Indian camp and aimed four Hotchkiss repeating cannons directly at the tepees. His intention was to disarm the Indians and escort them to the railroad in Nebraska and take them out of the hostile zone. Forsythe ordered the Indians to surrender their weapons. The warriors refused. Robert M. Utley describes the tense and volatile situation:

> But as the soldiers began to search for the Indians' guns powerful emotions built up on each side. A medicine man pranced about inciting the men to fight – their ghost shirts would protect them. The troopers grew more and more nervous. One seized a deaf man to take away his rifle. It went off. The medicine man tossed a handful of dirt in the air. A knot of warriors threw off their blankets and leveled their Winchesters at a rank of cavalrymen. Both sides fired at once, and the fight that neither side intended or expected burst upon them.

Big Foot lay in a wagon feverishly ill with pneumonia. Weak, he arose from his pallet to watch. A rifle volley killed him and most of the chiefs that accompanied him. Utley continues:

> The Hotchkiss guns went into action, each belching forth 50 rounds a minute. The exploding shells flattened the Indian camp and filled the air with deadly flying fragments ... women and children went down along with the men. In less than an hour most of the fighting had ended. The battlefield was a scene of carnage. Almost two thirds of Big Foot's band had been cut down – at least 150 dead and 50 wounded ... the Army lost 25 killed and 39 wounded.

General Nelson Miles now turned his attention to the hostile Sioux holed up in the Stronghold. He had ordered reinforcements from military units stationed throughout the Southwest, including the 16th Infantry and Kane's company D at Fort Douglas. Soon, some thirty-five hundred soldiers encircled the Pine Ridge Agency while Miles sent in conciliatory messages encouraging surrender and promising decent treatment. Utley writes further:

> Slowly (the soldiers) moved toward Pine Ridge as the chiefs debated and quarreled over whether to trust the general and do his bidding. Thus combining force and diplomacy in just the right proportions, Miles turned the deadly incident of December 29 into a complete surrender on January 15, 1891.

Finally the end of the long and arduous task of keeping open the westward road to America's expansion was a reality.

Once each year, Kane traveled to Army departmental headquarters for weapons qualification. On October 1, 1891, he qualified as a rifle "Marksman" at the Department of the Platte in Omaha, Nebraska. He returned in July the next year and qualified as a small arms "Sharpshooter." By September of 1893, Fort Douglas

came under the Headquarters, Department of Colorado in Denver. On September 26, and on August 20, 1894 and September 15, 1896 Kane made his way to Denver for his annual weapons qualification.

On March 1, 1895, at Fort Douglas, the Army discharged Kane at the age of 46. The next day he re-enlisted for another three years. Apparently, some type of special order issued by the Adjutant General's Office (AGO) allowed him to re-enlist as a married man. By this time, the entry requirements were more sophisticated to determine if a man was physically fit for duty. They included the notation of distinguishing marks such as the 8"x 4 ½" tattoo Kane sported on his chest depicting a "woman riding on an eagle and flying a flag." His left forearm flexed a tattoo of a "dancing girl standing on a point of a star with right foot while the left foot and right arm are uplifted."

Meanwhile, in the wake of Chief Joseph's and the Nez Perce attempt to escape to Canada, Kane's unit was sent to Fort Sherman, a newly activated post near Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. On January 4, 1898 another letter issued from the AGO allowed him to serve as a married man. On March 1, 1898, Kane was discharged at Fort Sherman, and the following day he re-enlisted for three more years. His physical exam noted a "3/4 inch linear scar on his chin." Also, he sported a new tattoo ..." a Roman Cross on right forearm, size 3"x 2".

What happened next is unexplainable but may be related to the scar on his chin. On March 9, 1898, barely seven days later, Sergeant Kane was busted in rank to Private and removed from Fort Sherman. He was reassigned to Company A, 16th Infantry at Boise Barracks, Idaho. According to his descendants, Kane was a heavy drinker of alcoholic beverages, which may have been the root cause of his demotion. Half a world away, the United States and Spain were on a collision course to war. The battleship USS Maine blew up in Havana harbor. Many thought the blast was a deliberate act of sabotage. President McKinley asked Congress for

authority to use American military force to free Cuba from Spain. On April 25, 1898, the United States declared war on Spain. By the end of May, in the first wartime mobilization since the Civil War, more than 25,000 soldiers swamped Tampa, Florida – the port of embarkation for the Santiago expedition.

Amidst the confusion and the haphazard accumulation of war supplies and materials, Kane wrote to Annie at Boise Barracks:

> Tampa, Florida, June 5th 1898. My Dear Wife and Children. I received your kind and welcome (letter) and was glad to hear from you and to know you and the children was in good health. As for me, I am first-rate. Annie, there (sic) is getting ready to move but how soon, I do not know. Rumor says we are going to Porto Rico. And rumor says to Santiago de Cuba. I don't think anybody knows where we are going.

Kane then passed on some good news and his dream for the future:

> Annie, the Capt made me a Corpl and it won't be long before I will be a Sergt. It (will) give me better times ... and I think the 25 yrs bill will pass and take effect after the war. Why I kin go out as soon as I get home, and the higher the rank I hold, why the more money I will draw.

In an apparent reference to the Fort Sherman incident that sent him to Boise Barracks in disgrace, Kane wrote:

> You kin see that I have not drank anything since I left Boise or I would not have got promoted, for the Capt don't have no use for a man that drinks. I don't intend to drink until I get back home which I hope will be soon.

Kane's estimate of the wartime situation was:

> I don't believe and others believe the same as I do that this thing won't last longer than 2 months. The European navies will make the Queen of Spain give up for the sake of humanity ... They have no money, food or clothing for the soldiers. In every fight they have so far got whipped. Annie, this place is getting hotter everyday h-ll ain't in it ... this is about all the news I have to tell you. Kiss the children for me. Hoping to hear from you soon. Keep up good spirits. I remain as ever, Your loving Husband, Bob.

Bunks for men and stalls for horses were fitted into thirty-two ships and brought up along the wharf in groups of nine for loading. According to author G. I. A. O'Toole, there were no hoists or cranes and, except for the animals, everything had to be carried from the (railroad) cars to the transports on the backs of stevedores. Rations that could be consumed by one man in one day were sorted and assembled on the docks, which added to the confusion. Thousands of tourists, merchants and sightseers inundated Tampa. By June 9, soldiers were transported to Port Tampa about ten miles away, from where Kane wrote what would be his last letter:

> I drop you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along. Hoping when you receive this that you and the children are enjoying the best of health. We moved from Tampa down here and was boarding on steamships to go to Cuba. We are (standing out) in the Gulf until the other boat is loaded up and then I suppose we will start together. There is 29 steamships full to go. I think that it will be all together at about twenty thousand soldiers ... there is about twelve hundred men on the boat that the 16th is on and they have us packed like sardines in a tin box. I think there will be lots of the men getting sick.

In the same letter Kane wrote that he had sent his watch home as he figured he wouldn't need it. He closed with these instructions:

> You need not wait (til) you hear from me. You can answer and direct it to "A" Co 16th Infantry, Tampa Florida, for it will follow no matter where we go. Hoping to hear from you soon. Kiss the children for me. I remain as ever, your affectionate Husb, Robt Kane Co "A" 16th Inf. Tampa Florida.

These were Kane's last words addressed to his family. It is not clear if the two letters were ever mailed because they were handed down to his descendants, folded tightly in an inner pocket of his *Soldier's Handbook*.

The war actually began June 22nd when the U.S. Marines captured Guantánamo Bay and 17,000 troops landed at Siboney and Daiquirí, east of Santiago de Cuba. Two days later, Lt. Colonel Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders fought a bitter battle at Las Guásimas enroute to Santiago. The last of the American troops landed on June 26. General W. Rufus Shafter, commanding general of the American expeditionary force, estimated two full days would be needed to move all the troops up the Santiago road to camps near the front, but it wasn't until the evening of June 30, when most of the American forces were camped in the vicinity of a hill called *El Pozo*, close to the village of El Caney.

Earlier, General Adna R. Chaffee and newsman Richard Harding Davis reconnoitered the area from atop El Pozo. O'Toole writes:

> Immediately below the vantage point of El Pozo the Santiago road disappeared into thick forest to emerge again about a mile across the valley in the grassy plain at the foot of San Juan Heights. Chaffee pointed to the map, which showed that a narrow jungle trail departed from the main road in the middle of the woods and branched off to the southwest, emerging on the grassy plain about a

> thousand feet south of the main road. "The enemy knows where those two trails leave the wood," Chaffee said. "They have their guns trained on the openings. If our men leave the cover and reach the plain from those trails alone they will be piled up so high that they will block the road."

Davis noted,

> ... a long yellow pit opened in the hillside of San Juan, and in it we could see straw sombreros rising and bobbing up and down ... The rifle pits were growing in length and number ... in plain sight from the hill of El Poso, the enemy was entrenching himself at San Juan and at the village of El Caney to the right.

Shafter's plan was to capture El Caney before ordering a frontal assault on San Juan Heights so that enemy forces would not be at his back. General Henry W. Lawton was assigned to take El Caney. He estimated he could do the job in two to three hours. After El Caney and San Juan Heights were secured, the main advance to Santiago would occur the following day. The plan was set. The attack would begin at daybreak, July 1st. How soon Kane's Company A got into the action is unknown. Troops moved up the Santiago Road, and got bunched up and fired upon by the Spaniards who were using Mauser rifles with the new smokeless cartridge. The American troops could not see where the enemy firepower came from, but when an American Springfield rifle fired it emitted a cloud of blue smoke "... the size of a cow." Spanish sharpshooters did the rest.

Pinned downed by heavy enemy fire, Lawton's force literally inched their way forward. The capture of El Caney would take a lot longer than estimated. By 1 p.m., most of the American forces were deployed at the base of San Juan Hill and were taking casualties. Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders took a position at the

base of Kettle Hill while everyone waited for Lawton to finish with El Caney. Roosevelt would write in his memoirs:

> The Spaniards had a hard position to attack ... but we could see them ... By the time I had reached the lines of the regulars of the first brigade I had come to the conclusion that it was silly to stay in the valley firing at the hills, because that was really where we were most exposed, and that the thing to do was to try to rush the entrenchments.

Across the valley on San Juan Hill, a blockhouse stood about a quarter of a mile to the southwest of Roosevelt's position. The 16th Infantry, part of General Hamilton S. Hawkins infantry brigade, had been advancing across the valley under heavy Spanish fire. They arrived at the Aguadores Creek Bed, a short distance from the San Juan River and halted. To advance further would expose them to a merciless barrage of gunfire. Behind them, more troops piled in causing congestion and confusion. The choice was either get trampled by your own troops or take your chances charging up the hill.

> "By God, there go our boys up the hill," someone shouted. To the left of the Rough Riders other regiments were charging up Kettle Hill. Roosevelt recalled, "The whole line, tired of waiting and eager to close with the enemy, was straining to go forward ..."

Charles Johnson Post, a Private with the 71st Regiment of New York Volunteers recalled the event:

> There went up what the academic histories call a cheer, but it was nothing more than a hoarse scream of relief from scores of men and the yell that soldiers give those whom they wish to honor. It was Hawkins's brigade, its two regiments, the Sixth and Sixteenth running in a pack, unleashed

> from the jungle, and hell bent for the red tiled roof that crowned San Juan Hill. It was a running spearhead. There was no nice order, no neatly formed companies crossing that plain or mounting the slope. It was more like a football field when the game is over and a mess of people are straggling across it, except that these men were on the run, yelling, and with no time to lose.

The infantry crested the hill; the Spaniards spilled out of their trenches and fled down the other side. By 4:00 pm, the battle was over. On that day of July 1, 1898, the American cost in total casualties during the battle were 1,180 wounded and 205 killed. The 16th suffered fourteen killed and 115 wounded while crossing the San Juan River. Corporal Robert Kane was among the fourteen killed.

Life Must Go on for Eugenia and Children

No one remembers anymore how or when military authorities informed Eugenia that her husband was killed in action. More than likely the War Department sent a terse telegram addressed to her at Boise Barracks, Idaho. With little time for grief, she had to maintain the welfare of her three children, settle her husband's affairs with the Army, and decide whether or not to return home to Brownsville, Texas. By September 8, 1898, the Adjutant General's Office rendered a final statement for Corporal Robert Kane. He was due back pay from the 31st of May 1898 to the date of his death. He was due, also, a bonus for ten years continuous service at the rate of $3.00 per month plus a clothing allowance of $13.63, which he had never used.

On September 18, 1898, Eugenia wrote a letter from Boise Barracks to the "Auditor for the War Department, Washington D.C.:

> Pursuant to par 16, AR (Army Regulations), I respectfully make application herewith for arrears

of pay and proceeds of sale of the effects of my late husband, Robert Kane, late Corp. Co. "A" 16th Infantry, who was killed in action at Santiago de Cuba on July 1st, 1898.

Attention is invited to the enclosed letter from 1st Lieut. R.R. Steerman 16th Infantry, my late husband's immediate Commanding Officer, stating that final statements etc has been forwarded to the Adjutant General, U.S.A. Washington D.C. Very respectfully, Mrs. Eugenia Kane, Widow of the late Corp. Robert Kane Co A 16 Inf."

Her request went through the chain of command. On October 25, 1898, the Department of Interior acknowledged receipt of her claim for a pension and forwarded it to the Treasury Department on October 26.

Almost as an afterthought, the War Department felt it advisable to inform Eugenia how he died. A document dated October 21, 1898 reads:

Respectfully returned to Mrs. Robert Kane, Boise Barracks, Idaho. The Official list of killed and wounded shows that Robert Kane, Corp'l Co "A" 16th U.S. Infantry, was killed in battle of San Juan, Cuba, July 1, 1898. (signed) Thomas W. Ord, Assistant Adjutant General.

On January 3, 1899, Eugenia wrote a last note from Boise Barracks. It was a receipt that read:

I have received and have in my possession all the effects left by my husband Robert Kane, late Corporal, Company "A" 16th Infantry embraced in inventory made by 2nd Lieut. S.R. Holbrook, 4th Cavalry on October 28, last, including the barber

chair which was in the possession of the Post Quartermaster.

It was time to go home. How she traveled to Brownsville and when is unknown. She and the three girls probably journeyed by train at government expense. They settled in on St. Charles Street and began to mend the broken pieces of their lives. During early 1899, the War Department contacted Eugenia and informed her that the Spanish American War dead were being returned to the United States. Did she want her husband buried in a family plot in Brownsville or would she prefer that he be buried along with 350 other soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery? According to family legend, Eugenia decided that he should be buried at Arlington because the Army could not be sure that the remains in a coffin shipped home would be Robert's.

April 6, 1899, was the day selected for burial at Arlington. Michael Robert Patterson provides a contemporary newspaper account:

> Three Hundred and Fifty-six Laid To Rest in Arlington Cemetery
>
> An impressive service by Episcopal and Catholic Clergymen at the Grave
>
> Washington – April 6, 1899 – With full honors of war, upon the crest of the southern slope of Arlington Cemetery this afternoon, the nation, represented by President McKinley, his cabinet and other high dignitaries of the government, the commanding general of the army, and other distinguished officers, all the regular and militia organizations of the District of Columbia and a concourse of 15,000 people paid the last tribute of honor and respect to the 336 officers and men who gave their lives on distant battlefields for their country in the war with Spain, and who were today mustered into the silent army that sleeps in the last bivouac of the brave.

The spot selected is in the new addition to the Cemetery looking out upon the broad sweeping Potomac. To the right raise the ramparts of old Fort McPherson, to the left are the countless graves of heroes of the Civil War, and to the rear the stately old Lee Mansion and Fort Myer. In this burial lot, which covered two acres in extent, in parallel rows, the wooden boxes containing the caskets were ranged, separated by great mounds of earth. Over each box an American flag was draped.

There was no particular order in the disposition of the remains, though an exception was made in the case of the officers. The boxes containing the bodies of Captain Edgar Hubert of the Eighth U. S. Infantry; Lieutenant L. I. Barnett, Ninth U. S. Infantry; Lieutenant William Wood, Twelfth U. S. Infantry; Lieutenant R. S. Turman, Sixth U. S. Infantry; and Lieutenant Francis Creighton, U. S. Volunteer Signal Corps, were placed at the head of the line of graves immediately under the eyes of the Presidential party. Of the others, fully 70 per cent are identified; about 30 per cent are wholly unknown or known only to the regiment to which they belonged.

A platform had been erected enclosed with flags and drapery mourning, but the day was an ideal one, and the sun shining from a cloudless sky and the platform was practically unoccupied. Before the arrival of the Presidential party and the military escort, detachments from the fourth and Fifth Artillery kept vigil over the dead. Long before the arrival of the military, thousands of people had surrounded the enclosure where the dead soldiers lay ...

The troops were formed on three sides of a rectangle, and files of soldiers were marched into the ranks of the dead. Flanking the open space at the head of the graves were the red-coated Artillerymen who were to fire the last salute, and on the left was stationed the Fourth Artillery Band. The President, accompanied by Secretaries Hays, Gage, Long, Hitchcock, Wilson, Postmaster General Smith, Assistant Secretary Taylor, General Corbin, General John M. Wilson and Colonel Bingham, came forward with uncovered head and took his place in the open space facing the graves. He was followed by General Miles and his staff in full uniform and by other distinguished guests, including some of the representatives of foreign countries.

Immediately the band broke out in the sweet strains of "Nearer My God to Thee," and Post Chaplain C. W. Freeland of Fort Monroe, in the ecclesiastical robes of his office, with Rev. Father McGee of St. Patrick's church, followed by three purple-gowned acolytes, advanced to the graves and the funeral services began. They were very simple, but very impressive. The Rev. Mr. Freeland read the military committal services of the Episcopal Church, beginning with "Man that is born of woman" and concluding with the promise of Heaven contained in the words "I am the resurrection and the life." As he pronounced the words "Dust to dust, earth to earth," the soldiers at the side of each grave crumbled a clod of earth upon each casket. This vast concourse bared their heads to the solemn words and thousands joined in the Lord's Prayer. The Rev. Father McGee then consecrated with the churchly power invested in him the earth into which the bodies of the Catholic soldiers were

placed. Meantime, from Fort Myer, booming down the wind, came the dull roar of a gun every half hour, and the national ensign there and at the Lee mansion were run down to half mast.

As soon as the religious services had been concluded, flanking detachments of the Fourth and Fifth Artillery fired three volleys and in the solemn hush that followed the salute, the bugle sounded "Taps." The last religious and military rites to the dead heroes were over, and the Presidential party and the military departed, leaving the work of actual interment to follow. As each of the caskets weighs almost five hundred pounds and requires eight men to handle it, it will be two or three days before all of the bodies are in their graves. In order to permit all government employees to attend the services that afternoon, all the departments and the Federal courts were closed by an executive order of the President and all the flags in the city were half-masted.

Robert Kane is among the "30 percent" who are unidentified. A number carved in the top of a six-inch square of marble marks his gravesite along with the 100 or more identical blocks of marble. During the next several years, Eugenia corresponded with the Department of the Interior regarding the status of her widow's pension. To make ends meet during the interim, she worked as a sales clerk in Mrs. H. Bollack's Dry Goods Store on 12th street opposite the Brownsville City Market. Except for Olivia's condition, the other girls were mature enough to take care of themselves.

At age 17 on August 12, 1902, Julia Kane married Benjamin Frank Mason, a Fort Brown surgeon. The wedding was a gala affair that took place in the J.I.P. Franklin home hosted by his wife Tomasita, one of Eugenia's orphaned "sisters." The Masons

traveled to Eagle Pass, Texas, where Frank opened a pharmacy. Apparently business was good, but the marriage did not last. Frank developed a sudden urge to return to his family home in Virginia because either he or someone in his family was ill. Julia elected not to accompany him. Within a short time she received word that Frank had died. There was nothing left to do but close the Eagle Pass store and return to her mother's home at 103 St. Charles Street in Brownsville.

On July 26, 1906, another tragedy stuck the Kane family. Eugenia's youngest daughter Lizzie died. Apparently, she ingested some rat poison either accidentally or deliberately. She is buried in the old City Cemetery. The debate about the circumstances of her death still exists today because it was said that she had just broken up with her boyfriend. The 1910 Federal Census for Brownsville listed Eugenia and the two girls. As of April 19, both Eugenia and Julia were employed as private nurses. Family legend states further that Eugenia was a mid-wife working under Doctor McAllen's supervision. She helped deliver many Brownsville babies including two born to the R.B. Rentfro family.

Brian Robertson in his book *Wild Horse Desert* titled a chapter "Legends of Pancho Villa and Shadows of German Spies." The chapter opens:

> In the years following 1910, the Wild Horse Desert was the scene of a period of turbulence that has been called The Bandit Wars. The unrest was, at first, an echo of the eruptions taking place in Mexico's government. Little by little, the complex reasons behind the attacks would unfold, creating an astonishing mosaic of political factions, revolutionaries, and foreign spies.

Porfirio Diaz abandoned the presidency. Francisco I. Madero became the anti-re-election candidate. In addition to Villa, stormy events swirled over the additional would-be presidents such as Zapata, Carranza, Orozco, Huerta and Obregon. Revolutions

and counter-revolutions spilled over the Rio Grande as so-called bandits raided outlying ranches, killing anyone who stood in the way. The excuse was that these were partisan forces that needed cattle to feed their soldiers.

Here in the Lower Rio Grande Valley the period from early 1915 to late 1917 was the bloodiest on record. Bandit forays, murders, and pillaging were commonplace, and all were blamed on Villa. In truth, Villa had his hands full elsewhere. In October 1914, he tried to dominate the riotous Convention of Aguascalientes. He officially split from Carranza, and in April 1915 he suffered two disastrous defeats at Celaya. In October, President Woodrow Wilson officially recognized Carranza as head of the Mexican Government. Feeling frustrated and betrayed, Villa ordered the assassination of 16 neutral American mining engineers while they were riding a train near Santa Ysabel, Chihuahua. On March 9, 1916, he raided Columbus, New Mexico--the only documented Villa strike on U.S. soil.

Julia Kane once said that she sold cigars to Pancho Villa when she operated a tobacco and candy counter at the Miller Hotel in Brownsville. Author Brian Robertson writes in *Wild Horse Desert*:

> There are ample legends and even photographs that owners swear to have been taken in places such as Reynosa, Brownsville, and even downtown McAllen ... Many persons living along the border claim to have a rifle given to them by Villa, and the frequency of such claims rivals the New England slogan "George Washington Slept Here." ... Whether or not Villa ever crossed into south Texas, his influence was felt on both sides of the river.

Early Brownsville historian Frank Cushman Pierce preserves one Villa-connected incident. He relates that on March 27, 1915, a 700-man force under Villista General José Rodríguez attacked Matamoros. In the ensuing machine gun *mélée*, the defenders, led by General Emiliano P. Nafarrete and Coronel Procopio Elizondo,

killed 250 of Villa's men and wounded over 200 more. In a gallant gesture, the victors allowed the wounded to cross the Rio Grande to the U.S. side at the Las Rucias Ranch, about five miles west of Brownsville. American families housed them and tended their injuries. Later, the survivors boarded a train to Laredo where they rejoined Villa forces. Nowhere do the records indicate that Pancho Villa, himself, took part in the battle of Matamoros.

Some of the hostility toward Americans that lingered from the Mexican war surfaced in another ideology that emerged in a concept called the Plan of San Diego that advocated the recapture of lands lost during the Mexican War. German spies kept stirring up the Plan hoping to persuade neutral Mexico to ally with Germany in a war seemingly on the horizon. In 1915, most of South Texas again would be plundered in a destructive guerrilla war between Hispanics and certain Anglo Americans that devastated the region.

In spite of the political unrest in Mexico during which many Brownsville and Rio Grande Valley residents left South Texas, Julia Kane Mason married a traveling salesman named Mose Finkelstein. He was born on June 4, 1884, in Luling, Texas, and raised in the Jewish faith. As a young man in August-September 1900, he survived the hurricane that devastated Galveston, Texas, and killed 6,000 people. His family owned and operated a world-class department store in El Campo, Texas. He was 33; she was 30. Mose called himself a "commercial traveler whose industry was paper products." They probably met during one of his periodic stays at the Miller Hotel.

On October 18, 1915, the newlyweds were treated to a reception, the likes of which they never forgot. "Bandits" raided the passenger train on which they were headed for Brownsville from Corpus Christi. A group of twenty or thirty Mexicans derailed Engine No. 101 about three miles south of Olmito by forcing out the spikes and shoving the rails off the ties. The following excerpts from the *Brownsville Herald* of October 19, 1915 tell the dramatic story:

TRAIN WRECKED, PASSENGERS ROBBED. 2 MEN KILLED, 1 FATALLY SHOT ALSO. 4 BADLY INJURED IN BLOODY ACTION BY MEXICAN BANDITS

Dr. E.S. McCain, deputy state health officer on the lower border and for the past six years state quarantine officer for this port, died at his residence above 1205 ½ Elizabeth street at 1:25 o'clock this afternoon as the result of wounds received in last night's train wreck and robbery. He is survived only by his wife. No funeral arrangements were announced this afternoon.

It was reported this afternoon that two men believed to have been implicated in the train wreck were summarily executed. Eight others were quizzed by officers and four of these were brought to Brownsville and placed in the county jail. The other four are reported held in the vicinity of the wreck for further investigation.

Two men dead, one fatally injured and four more or less seriously injured, is the net result of the wrecking and robbing of St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico passenger train 101 six and a half miles from Brownsville by a party of Mexican bandits estimated to number from twenty to thirty and alleged to have been headed by Luis de la Rosa, alleged co-leader with Aniceto Pizaña in recent border bandit troubles. The wreck and robbery occurred at 10:45 o'clock last night.

The dead: CORPORAL McBEE, Third United States Cavalry, shot to death. Engineer H.H. KENDALL, killed in wreck, found pinned under engine. Fatally injured: Dr. E.S. McCain, deputy state health officer, shot in abdomen. Harry J. Wallace, cattle dealer, shot in arm and hand, one finger shot off. R. Woodall, fireman, scalded and otherwise injured in wreck. Claada J. Brashear, Troop A, Sixth United States Cavalry, shot in jaw bullet coming out back

of neck, serious. C. H. Laymon, Troop D, Third United States Cavalry shot in neck and leg, not serious.

The robbery was conducted by five or six bandits clad in khaki uniforms and with cheap straw hats. Outside the train during the proceedings inside, (about) twenty Mexicans (shouting "Viva Carranza! Viva Pizaña!") kept up a constant fire, apparently shooting either over or under the train, according to John W. Sword of Hikesville, Ky., a discharged United States soldier who escaped from the train, ran three miles and gave the alarm.

Sword, who was dressed in civilian clothes, said that he and the three uniformed soldiers occupied a corner seat in the front of the smoking car. Suddenly there was a screech and the three men pitched forward. In a moment the train came to a halt and he noted five or six Mexicans crowding into the rear of the coach, next to the first class day coach. The Mexicans came forward with guns drawn and firing. The first firing was directed at Sword's companions and two of them fell, wounded. The third, McBee, was shot first in the leg and then in the neck as he was trying to escape from the car. None of the soldiers was armed ...

McCain and Wallace hid in the toilet. The bandits ordered them out but the two men refused and the Mexicans shot through the door hitting McCain in the abdomen and Wallace in the arm.

During the proceedings in the smoking compartment several passengers in the first class coach, among them Mr. and Mrs. M. Finkelstein of Houston, did not stir from where they were, either under or on seats. After completing their work in the smoking car, the bandits proceeded to the rear coach and relieved Mrs. Finkelstein of some jewelry and $50 in cash. Another diamond, her engagement ring, she turned under and saved. There were only a few passengers in this coach, the balance being relieved

of small amounts of money and jewelry. Mrs. Finkelstein formerly was Mrs. Julia Cain (sic) of Brownsville. No one in this coach was hurt ...

... The suitcases of the traveling man (P.W.) Sauer, and those of Finkelstein were found in the brush in the vicinity of the wreck this morning and brought to Brownsville and turned over to their owners ... Finkelstein said the bandits came for him twice, and threatened to kill him because he was a "gringo." "Are you Spanish?" was the first question. Finkelstein replied, "Yes, very." "Do you favor Carranza?" Finkelstein replied that he would, and as an afterthought decided that money would make the bandit go, and said, "Here, do you want some money?" The bandit did, and accepted the $50 – and went ...

An insistent "*vámanos*" from the outside interrupted the second time and caused all three bandits to hurriedly leave the train.

John H. Peavey recalled from memory, many years after the train wreck, his personal experience as a Deputy Sheriff of Cameron County:

When we reached the Tandy Road we found that the railroad trestle across the Resaca was burning and from the light of the fire we were able to see parts of the train. We hurried to the wreck, and then into the brush, looking for the bandits who had apparently left the scene. We returned and entered the two passenger cars. The lights were still burning dimly, and we found everyone on the floor and some under the seats. In the men's toilet we found Dr. E.S. McCain and Harry Wallace, both wounded. Seated on the floor between the seats of one of the cars, I found Morris Edelstein, a

businessman from Brownsville, and John Kleber, a Brownsville attorney ...

By daylight ... In the brush near the right of way ... I found the tools that the bandits had used to remove the fish plates and the spikes from the railroad rails and a piece of heavy wire that was still fastened to the loose rail. Apparently the rail had been left in position and just as the train approached, the wire was used to pull the rail and the train hit the ditch. The baggage and mail cars rolled over on their sides, but the two passenger coaches remained upright on the twisted rails and broken ties ... (We) took up the bandits' trail toward the river as their tracks were easy to follow.

Not far from the wrecked train we found an empty suitcase, a toilet case, and a little later a traveling bag and some clothing apparently from the bags; and that is the way it was all the way to the river – suitcases and clothing scattered along the trail through the brush. The bandits crossed the river into Mexico near the Villa Nueva Ranch just west of the pumping plant.

What prompted the Kane family's move from Brownsville to San Antonio is unknown, but many Brownsville and Rio Grande Valley residents left South Texas because of the political unrest in Mexico and the partisan "bandit" raids on the U.S. side of the border. Mose and Julia moved first and purchased a house at 216 Leopold Street. Later, Eugenia and Olivia moved to another home on Leopold, about three doors away.

At long last, on the 28th of May 1926, Eugenia was "... entitled to a pension at the rate of thirty dollars per month to commence June 4, 1926." She received, also, a three-dollar per month supplement for Olivia, "a helpless child." Apparently, Mose did well as a traveling salesman. By 1930, he and Julia had purchased two additional

homes – one on Devine Street and their new residence at 1130 Highland Boulevard. Two children were born to the Finkelstein family. The 1930 census lists Robert, age 9 and Sarah Louise, age 5. Julia opened a small restaurant on Flores Street and made tamales, which Robert would peddle to other restaurants and to neighbors up and down the street.

In October 1929, the U.S. Stock Market crashed and plunged the country into a world wide financial panic and economic depression. A credit crunch caused international bankruptcies and unemployment. By 1932, 12 million in the U.S. were jobless ... 5.6 million in Germany, and 2.7 million in England. The afflicted nations tried to protect themselves with tariff restrictions, but these simply dried up world trade. The stage was set for the rise of a former corporal in the German Army – Adolph Hitler. Mose lost his job. The company that employed him shut its doors unable to stay afloat in all the red ink. The Finkelsteins and Eugenia lost their homes to the mortgage lenders and returned to Brownsville. They were able to trade the Leopold Street property as down payment for a house at 1705 West Monroe Street that once belonged to Theresa Clark Clearwater, an esteemed Brownsville schoolteacher.

The family hung on and survived the hardships of World War II. Julia opened a little restaurant located on Elizabeth Street near what was then St. Joseph's School. Robert and Sarah Louise graduated from the old Brownsville High School on Palm Boulevard. He joined the U.S. Air Force and rose in rank and became a senior non-commissioned officer. On May 28, 1944, while stationed at an Air Corps gunnery school at Las Vegas Army Air Field, Robert married Sarah Lee Martin from North Little Rock, Arkansas. They would raise three children, Edgar, Shelley and Julie. Louise became a legal secretary and worked for several prestigious firms in Brownsville and Harlingen, including the Sams Foundation. On July 23, 1943, she married James Everet Lovelace from Clay County, Arkansas. He was a sailor stationed

at Kingsville Naval Air Station, Kingsville, Texas. James Carlton Lovelace and Margie Elaine Lovelace were born of this union.

On October 30, 1944, Eugenia died of "la Grippe", an influenza-like ailment, and was buried in the old Brownsville Cemetery with her daughter Elizabeth. In January 1945, Julia was appointed Olivia's legal guardian and continued to care for her sister until she died of pneumonia on September 21, 1951. Mose died on November 22, 1957 and was interred in the Finkelstein family plot in the Jewish Cemetery at Houston. Julia died many years later on October 31, 1980. Her 95-year lifetime spanned an incredible era from Indians and stagecoaches to astronauts and space walks. She is buried in Rose Lawn Memorial Gardens, Brownsville, Texas. Today, the descendants of Robert and Eugenia Kane are ordinary people who live during extraordinary times. They make the best of what life offers them.

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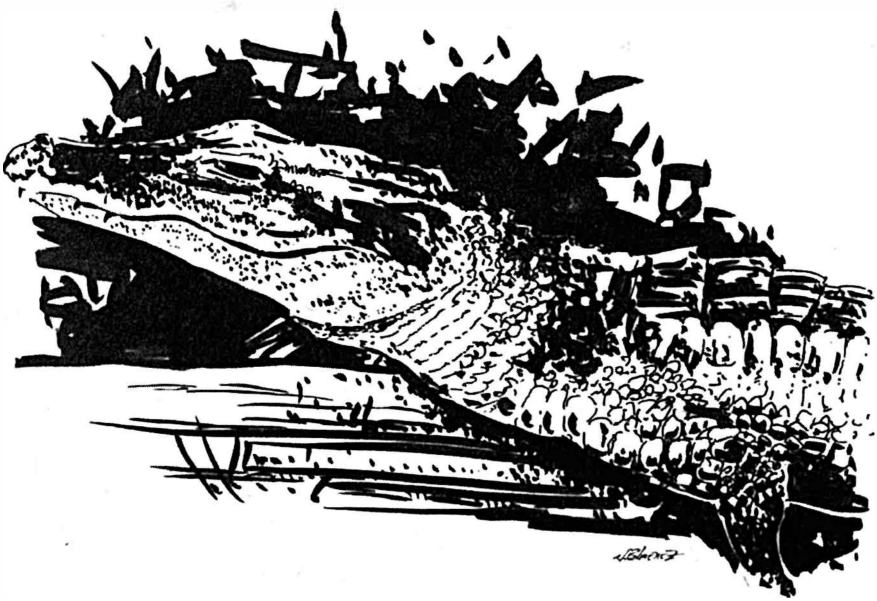

The Ghost's Car (El Coche Fantasma)

Gathered by Peter Gawenda in May 1982 from a student at TSC; in September 1983 at the barbershop close to City Hall in Market Square; and in August 1989 from an older student during a class at TSC

It is not too often that one is fortunate enough to see a car driven by a dead man, but then some people might consider this sight a misfortune. Matamoros has an old graveyard, dating back to the late 1700's. The locals know that it holds many secrets that only the very brave might discover. It is only natural, therefore, that

very few people will want to visit *el camposanto* at night. Those few are usually teenagers, who try to show off or who just happen to follow others. At night, the graveyard, commonly known as Santa Rosalia, is usually locked; heavy iron gates prevent easy access. But this only increases the challenge for the teen-age boys and girls.

The appearances of *el coche fantasma* are never repeated exactly the same way. One eyewitness account heard in 1983 is as follows. Four girls, all in their middle teens had seen the graveyard during the daytime and wondered whether all those stories they had heard from their Mexican friends were true. Someone suggested that it would be easy to find out.

One late afternoon, a car with the four girls crossed the border from Brownsville to Matamoros. They decided to first have some drinks at Blanca White's. By ten o'clock, they proceeded to the graveyard. They parked the car next to the graveyard's wall and walked to the gate, but it was closed. They started to feel uneasy, but looked inside, still debating what to do next. The girl who told the story mentioned that it was an unusually dark night, and, although it was warm, the girls felt chills running down their spines. By eleven, it had turned so dark that they could hardly see each other, and they decided to just leave and return home. Holding on to each other, they started to walk along the wall back to the car, when suddenly, out of nowhere, a car appeared. The girls pressed themselves against the wall and stared at the car's driver. His face was clearly visible, somehow illuminated. The girls felt that he stared at them with penetrating eyes. First the car seemed to head towards them, but then, barely passing them, the car disappeared through the closed gates. The girl said that there was no sound of a motor, only a sudden wind and then a vile odor, not very strong but it was there for just a few moments.

They all had clearly recognized a horrible face that they shouldn't have seen because it was very dark; pitch dark, and then, how could the car have disappeared through the closed gates! They all had the impression that they could look through the car and

through the driver. The moment the girls realized what they had experienced they ran; one fell and had to be helped up. They ran until they had reached their car under streetlights. They were trembling, and they were frightened. The girl who had fallen seemed to be in shock and had to be dragged to the car. A few weeks later, two of the girls ventured back with their boyfriends, trying to overcome their fear, but when walking toward the gates of the graveyard they experienced a wave of the vile smell ... and this time the smell seemed to be stronger. The girls and their boyfriends preferred to leave fast. The girl who told the story was taken by her mother to a *curandera*, who was consulted " ... *para que los malos espíritus salgan de la enferma*". The girl said that they never went back.

In a later incident, on an evening in November of 1986, when a funeral procession approached the gate of the graveyard, a car seemed to block the entrance. The funeral procession stopped, and the driver of the hearse who saw the stopped vehicle wanted to let it exit the graveyard first. The man beside him did not see anything and wondered why the driver had stopped. According to the driver, who had his window rolled down, the engine of the car at the gate was not running. Two young men from the second car of the funeral procession saw the stopped car and believed that its engine had stalled. They jumped out and walked to the car, wanting to help push it to the side of the road. But when they approached it, it just vanished. The boy who told the story said that it was almost like walking into a smelly fog, which cleared immediately. He insisted that he saw the stalled car and a strange-looking driver inside the car.

Two other incidents were told in the late 1980's, one having occurred in the seventies and one in the early sixties. There always seems to be the same occurrence. A car drives through closed gates, the driver stares at the observers, and there is some type of vile odor or fog.

José Esparza: A Worthy Son of a Worthy Father

by

Milo Kearney and Tony Pineda

In a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song from their operetta "Ruddigore," the modest hero Robin proclaims:

> If you wish in the world to advance,
> Your merits you're bound to enhance,
> You must stir it and stump it,
> And blow your own trumpet,
> Or, trust me, you haven't a chance.

The truth is that great leaders who work modestly can be underemphasized in our historical chronicling of blood and guts and assertive egos. José María Esparza, a major rancher in the San Benito region at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, is a case in point. State Senator Eddie Lucio took one step toward rectifying that injustice when on 30 July 2005 at Don José Esparza Park in San Benito he presented Senate Resolution No. 42 honoring the contributions of José Esparza to the cultural heritage of the Rio Grande Valley. The resolution was presented to José's last surviving daughter, Mrs. Natalia Esparza Treviño, accompanied by her son Arnold Treviño.[1] He is also honored by an official Texas historical marker at the same José Esparza Park. This article is a further effort to give José Esparza the credit and praise due to him.

José Esparza came from an illustrious line of prosperous ranchers.[2] Some of his relatives had received Spanish land grants by the Rio Grande River in the eighteenth century. One ancestor, Tomás Sánchez, had founded Laredo, Texas, in 1755, explored the Nueces River, and acted as a local representative of the Spanish Viceroy.[3] According to family recollections, one relative, Gregorio Esparza, was a follower of Captain Seguín in the battle of the Alamo in

1836, and was the only one there to be given a Christian burial. His body was carried out by his brother, who was fighting under Antonio López de Santa Ana. Gregorio was mentioned in John Wayne's movie about the Alamo, and was again briefly mentioned by last name in the 2004 remake of the Alamo.[4] José's property rights over the Rancho La Encantada traced back to the 1781 San Pedro de Carricitos Grant along the Rio Grande River.[5] The Mexican deeds to this grant had been acknowledged by the State of Texas after the Mexican War.[6]

José was born as the eldest son of Carlos Esparza at his grandfather Pedro Esparza's and father Carlos's *Rancho de San Juan el Encantado*, on 8 July 1856.[7] Pedro Esparza had married Felicidad Villarreal, who had inherited the ranch from her grandfather Pedro Villarreal, who had received the San Pedro de Carricitos Grant in 1781 for his services to the Spanish Crown.[8] José's father, Carlos Esparza (1828-1885), was of major importance in Rio Grande Valley history. José's mother, Francisca García de Esparza (1856-1927),[9] came from a neighboring ranch. Carlos had chosen Francisca as a love match concluded hurriedly in opposition to Carlos' father, Pedro, in a union sealed in a service in Brownsville's Immaculate Conception Church on 30 January 1850.[10] Pedro had arranged a loveless match for Carlos to the daughter of a wealthy family, but overhearing the contempt of his prospective mother-in-law as the wedding service was about to commence, Carlos had bolted, riding his horse straight to Francisca's ranch to propose.[11] The marriage produced eight children: José (1856-1927), Román (1858-1944), Rosalio (1860-1935), Antonio (1865-1935), Carlota (1870-1933), Felipa (1872-1925), Juan (1875-1950), and María Rita (1880-1940), later married to Paulino Vara Coy.[12]

José's matrimonial history was also dramatic. His first wife was Rufina Sayas,[13] whom he married in Brownsville's Church of the Immaculate Conception on 9 December 1877.[14] She was reputed to be a beauty.[15] They had five children together, namely Santos (born 1878), later married to Antonio Escamilla; Ignacia (1880-1952), later married to Nichlas Cantú; Francisca (1882-1962), later

married to Ismael Montalvo; Angela (born in 1884), later married to Hilario Chasperreta; and Sophia (1886-1946), later married to Casimiro Salazar.[16] Rufina tragically burned to death when, while taking a bath, she dropped a kerosene lamp on the floor, catching her hair on fire.[17]

José married his second wife, Virginia Cavazos Reyes (1875-1967),[18] on 28 December of 1895,[19] when she was twenty and he was thirty-nine. According to family recollections, her family's property had been under attack from counter land claims, and her father hoped for support from José. Such arranged marriages could lead to loveless marriages, and José seems to have fallen into this trap, which his father had avoided by running away at the last minute. Virginia was said to have been in love with a Texas Ranger, no less, and so to have objected strenuously to the marriage. The result was a life-long resentment, which left José's second marriage one of emotional estrangement. Virginia bore José ten children: Ester (born in 1896), later married to Harry Markoss; Federico (who was born and died in 1898); Flavia (1900-1996), who later married Donald Orason; Isora (born in 1902), who later married Roberto Narro; Inocente (Inez) (born in 1904); José Enrique (born in 1906); Virgina (1907-1925); Juventino (1909-1997); Natalia (1911-2005), later married to Alfredo Treviño; and Celia (1913-2004), later married to Emiliano García.[20] According to Joe Esparza, Jr., El Ranchito Ranch after José's death eventually went to Maria Flavia, who was by then married to Donald Orason.[21]

Virginia became a midwife as a free service to their ranchers, who were not being supplied with this help by any doctor. She is said to have delivered over a thousand babies and to never have lost a mother.[22] Her grandson Joe Esparza, Jr. (the son of Joe Esparza, Sr.) remembered her as a kind lady who fed *maza* (corn meal) to caged birds she kept on the porch of her house next to the old church on Military Highway. He also recalled her telling him *cuentos* about a *la llorona* heard crying in the night at El Ranchito,[23] as the little settlement that sprang up around the La Encantada Ranch on the outskirts of San Benito is called.

Just as José's father Carlos had been close to his own father, Pedro (for whom he acted as secretary and bookkeeper),[24] it is hard to overstate the impact of José's father on José's life and personality. José's outstanding features of individuality and entrepreneurship, humility, compassion, cooperation with the Church, and respect for learning were the characteristics also of Carlos, whom he seems to have taken as his paragon.

Individuality and Entrepreneurship

The individuality and entrepreneurship of the Esparzas might be considered first. Both father and son were successful businessmen. During the Civil War, Carlos had grown very wealthy by selling food supplies and livestock. He had been most careful of his money, which he had kept locked away under his bed in preference to entrusting it to the unreliable banks of his day.[25]

For his part, José was an investor in Brownsville's Merchants and Planters Rice Milling Company for a time, although he eventually gave up rice cultivation as damaging to his soil.[26] Bilingual in Spanish and English,[27] he served as a Cameron County commissioner between 1882 and 1885.[28] In this capacity, he exerted a major beneficial influence on Valley business, including his own, by his successful efforts to bring the railroad to Brownsville by 1904. He invested $50,000 in the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway Company, helping to spur the Valley's commercial growth.[29] Once this was accomplished, he posed with his relatives, all in their best clothes, in front of the first train to arrive, in a photo still cherished by his grandchildren Arnold and Natalia Treviño.[30] According to one account, José named the new town of San Benito after this beloved four-year-old grandson by a daughter from his first marriage, San Benito Montalvo, when José managed to bring a railroad to stimulate new towns in Cameron County.[31] San Benito Montalvo was still living in San Benito at the time of the writing of this article, age ninety-eight. José, along with other Hispanic ranching families, gave a boost to the early growth of the new town of San Benito,

founded in 1907.[32] José moved his ranch headquarters about a half mile north on the Military Highway, naming the new ranch *El Ranchito*, a move completed by 1910.[33]

Humility

Carlos had shown an admiration for humility, writing that, "Humility is the mother of compassion."[34] José lived out the same commitment. One family story relates how one day José rode with his men to visit a neighboring ranch house in San Benito. The host welcomed him by stating, "Come in, and your men can go to the bunk house." José is said to have replied, "Where I go, my men go. If they are not allowed in, I won't come in either," whereupon he returned home. The neighboring family subsequently apologized and assured José that in the future José's men would be welcome to enter the house with him.[35] When it came to christening the Encantada Elementary School he had founded, José resisted the temptation to name it for himself. When his daughter Natalia asked him why he had not done so, José replied, "God knows what I am doing."[36]

Compassion

José's father, Carlos, had devoted his life to helping the poverty-ridden and often oppressed Hispanic population of his day. He often handed out a coin to each person he met. He had been very aware of health issues, and had urged his workers to adopt good health practices. He had always drunk more wine than water, which, drunk unpurified from the resacas or from the river, carried the danger of disease. He had required his workers to boil their water and to store it in clay containers to absorb impurities, and he had cleaned the deeper resacas as a source of water for the crops. He had urged proper diet on his workers, had grown medicinal herbs in his garden, had had many young men married at sixteen and young women at fourteen to discourage venereal disease from promiscuity, and had drained swamps in an early premonition of a possible connection between mosquitoes and malaria. Carlos had disliked *curanderas* and other religious healers as superstitious,

barring them from his ranch and calling people to turn to true medicine instead. He had also prohibited children from taking dangerous jobs.[37]

Similarly, José took good care of his ranch hands and their families. He was a generous man, who felt comfortable with poor folks.[38] He held at his own expense an annual carnival for his workers' families between his ranch house and the church.[39] The ranch house, now gone, stood to the west of the church on Military Highway. It was a good-sized one-story structure with outside stairs leading up to an attic and with a long porch on two sides.[40] José followed up on his father's project of building a new courthouse for Cameron County.[41] His hope was to provide a site for justice to Hispanics close to home, to obviate the rough justice that the Texas Rangers had provided. Before this, the closest court houses were in San Antonio and Houston. The family remembers that Brownsville's first Courthouse once had a plaque in front of it, now missing, which listed José as the major donor.[42] José's portrait hangs in the new Cameron County Courthouse in Brownsville.[43] He also supported José Canales,[44] the first Hispanic State Representative from the Rio Grande Valley, who helped to reform the Texas Rangers.[45]

Cautious Support of Mexican Resistance Fighters

Both father and son had suffered from the shift from Mexican to American sovereignty. Carlos had had to fight against land grabbers in the period after the Mexican War. In particular, he had warded off a heated attempt between 1866 and 1871 to take away his ranch on the part of Sabas Cavazos, a half-brother of Juan Cortina, a man Carlos had called "a hideous monster" and "a spider of the most poisonous type."[46] José had seen himself, along with other local Hispanic families, elbowed to the side in the government and social structure of the new town of San Benito founded nearby in 1907.[47]

Carlos' cloak of protection had extended to guarding local Hispanics from Anglo oppression, a task he shouldered in cooperation with

his famous friend and fellow rancher Juan Nepomuceno Cortina. Juan Cortina and his second wife Rafaela Cortés had been witnesses at Carlos' wedding.[48] Carlos had served as an officer in the Mexican army in the Mexican-American War, fighting in the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, and had lost several of his relatives in Matamoros and Monterrey to murder by American troops. Subsequently, despite bitter quarrels between the two men, Carlos sporadically had supported Cortina's insurgency with money, food and military supplies, recruits, and (very reluctantly) espionage.[49] His father-in-law, Ramón García, had also spied for Cortina.[50] In 1915, José aided the insurgent Aniceto Pizaña, but subsequently supported the stationing of U.S. troops along the border.[51] Carlos had expressed his feelings in Spanish verse, now surviving only in English prose translation:

> I must fight...
> I weep for, pray for, and fight for
> My blood, my soul, my people.[52]

However, Carlos had preferred to work for Hispanic rights in a peaceful manner. The same poem continues:

> Why must races clash, crush, caravan,
> And congregate in grudge?[53]

Thus, he had been relieved when Cortina was captured and sent to exile in Mexico City in 1876. He had found a more peaceful route to his goal by working through the American legal system, becoming a sheriff, providing funds toward the new courthouse, closing tax loopholes, and removing corrupt county clerks. He also worked for a harmonious cooperation between the feuding local Democratic and Republican parties.[54]

Likewise, José is remembered for his persistent championship of the vulnerable Hispanics. He is said to have protected his workers by gleaning information from the Texas Rangers that he could use to their benefit. The Texas Rangers respected him as being "sly as a fox," but kept an eye on him.[55] While maintaining

a personal aloofness, he lent a cautious and indirect support in 1915 to Anizeto Pizaña and the San Diego Plot.[56] José is open to criticism on this score, for this conspiracy not only had intended to separate South Texas once again from the United States by stirring a Mexican-American revolt, but also had called for the murder of Anglo men. It had never come to fruition due to the arrest of one of the conspirators in McAllen.[57] José's son-in-law San Benito businessman Ismael Montalvo was also ready to help the uprising, and for the rest of his life slept with a gun at the side of his bed in fear of repercussions should his involvement be uncovered. [58]

Cooperation with the Church

Both father and son had worked with the Catholic Church to find solutions for the plight of the poor. Carlos had developed some cynicism regarding Christianity and the Church. Some of his *dichos* reveal his point of view: "Religion was created to keep the oppressed man content."[59] "Religion in our society bases its strength upon the unforeseen, the miraculous, and its mystery of faith – all of which is absurd."[60] "Don't threaten me with another hell in the next world, priest! It is so out of date and absurd. I am convinced that hell is here, and all the devils are among us."[61] "I want to ride into the gates of paradise on a horse bringing a fine harem with me."[62] Nonetheless, Carlos was in no way totally cynical regarding Christianity. He also wrote: "Of course I believe in God! How else could I keep my sanity and hope through life?"[63] "[Works of nature] are an expression of God's love for us."[64] "God constantly helps us in our short lives, and the physician and lawyer bill us."[65] Carlos had cooperated with the Oblate Fathers and a group of religious women to set up an orphanage, and had donated money to establish Church schools.[66]

José likewise supported the Catholic Church, but, like his father, did not present a picture of conventional piety. A lover of shooting, hunting, and tequila, he once is said to have accepted a spur-of-the-moment wager to join a contest with an acquaintance to see which man could shoot out the light of a candle at a distance of

about twenty-five feet, despite José's being under the influence of tippling. After his challenger had thrice missed the candle, José stumbled and fell as he fired his first shot, but by luck or skill or both managed to win the bet.[67] According to one genealogical list, José sired two children by women beside his wife: María Esparza, born to an unknown mother in an unknown year and later married to Matías Pérez, and Lorenzo Sánchez, born to Timotea H. [*sic.*] in 1902.[68] Still, José took his religion seriously enough to once shave off his long twirled moustache as a result of a *promesa* (a promise made to God or to a saint, to be carried out in thanks for an answered prayer).[69] José was concerned to provide his community with a place to worship. For a time he brought in a priest to hold mass on Sundays at his ranch house for the people of the vicinity.[70] He subsequently donated land and built San Ignacio Church, which still stands on the Esparza-Domanski Highway (portion of the Old Military Highway), close to Pennsylvania Avenue, in El Ranchito, San Benito. Once it was built, he brought in from Spain a priest and a nun to teach the catechism.[71] Indeed, José's faith seems to have been, if anything, stronger than his father's, as the above-mentioned comment about God knowing what José was doing indicates.[72]

Respect for Learning

José's father, Carlos, had promoted public education as a way to fight prejudice, ignorance, and hypocricy.[73] He wrote, "Educate your children, my people, for they are our most valuable resource."[74] He also penned this sentiment, "Our deadly enemy is not the Gringo, but ignorance."[75] When criticized for harboring a dangerous liberalism, he had retorted that it was not as dangerous as living in the past.[76] Carlos had also been involved in the world of letters, leaving behind original writings in the form of poems and *dichos* (proverbs). Carlos had held *tertulias* (*salons*) at his La Encantada Ranch house from 1850 to 1885 to discuss developments in the arts and sciences and politics. Carlos had been especially involved in experiments with plants and animals.[77] His surviving *dichos* (proverbs) emphasize, among other topics, advice about old

age ("As one gets older, life becomes a memory"),[78] love for books ("Books are immortal souls"), and reflections on friendship ("If you have made two or three friends in your lifetime, you have accomplished a great task").[79] Carlos' respect for education was passed down, not only to his descendents through José (which will be detailed below), but to descendents through at least one of his other seven children, namely Antonio, as well (the other children being Rosalío, Felipa, Carlota, Román, Juan Francisco, and María Rita). These include Gilbert Zepeda, Jr., a drama teacher at Pharr-San Juan-Alamo High School, who has been honored at the White House and at an Oscar Awards ceremony as teacher of the year.[80] They also include Gilbert's cousins Celeste Sánchez, Assistant Superintendant for the San Benito Independent School District, and her sister Dr. Olivia Rivas, former Vice President of Student Affairs at the University of Texas at Brownsville and presently the Chair of the Department of Education.[81] Gilbert, Celeste, and Olivia are all great-grandchildren of José Esparza's brother Antonio Esparza.[82] Another descendent through another son of Carlos Esparza, namely Román Esparza, is Roman's great-grandson Roman "Dino" Esparza, presently a member of the Texas Southmost College Board of Trustees.[83]

Similarly, José was a patron of education, engaged in trying to give the children of his poor ranch hands a way out of poverty. Well educated himself,[84] he (along with the five other ranches then located along the Military Highway) established a one-room school.[85] In 1907, he gave both land and money for San Benito's first public school.[86] He also followed up on his father's plan to provide funds for a more ambitious school at La Encantada.[87] In 1910, he was appointed a member of a committee headed by James L. Landrum which formed the Landrum School District as the Cameron County Common School District No. 3. This merged the schools at El Calaboz and El Naranjo Ranches with that of El Ranchito at the El Ranchito site, since it was between the other two ranches. José Esparza donated an acre of land in return for naming the new entity La Encantada Elementary School.[88]

When the local school board failed to approve a teacher for his school, José also provided its first teacher (for its all grades in one system at that time). This teacher was his own brother Francisco Esparza (whom José sent to receive his teaching credentials in San Antonio).[89]

He is also said to have built another school in downtown San Benito.[90] He went so far as to give money for the children to purchase shoes to facilitate their getting to the school.[91] José was so insistent that the children take their schooling seriously that it is said he once walked into La Encantada School and caught his own son José, Jr. ("Pepe") acting up. José was said to have asked his brother Francisco how he would handle the situation if Pepe were not his nephew, to which Francisco replied that he would expel him from the class. So José removed Pepe from the school, assigning him ranch work instead.[92] Today, the school boasts a new larger building erected in 1958 on ten acres of land at a new location nearby, on the Rice Tract Road.[93]

José's esteem for education has also been passed on to his descendents. The new Assistant Principal of the school in 2005 is José's great-granddaughter Nedia L. Espinoza, daughter of Alfredo, the son of José Esparza's daughter Natalia. The school is now a large structure down Pennsylvania Street a short distance from the school's original site on the Esparza-Domanski Highway (portion of the Old Military Highway), which is now the José Esparza Park. Nedia commented that "Right now my grandfather is looking from the skies, and he's just blessing that school." Nedia's mother, Celia, is herself a teacher at Landrum Elementary School, and Nedia's brother Raul Treviño is principal at Las Yescas Elementary School in Los Fresnos, another brother, Gabriel Treviño, is a science teacher at Vernon Middle School in Harlingen, and two sisters are also teachers: Norma Linda Sandoval at Ed Downs Elementary School and Nita Diana Smith at Progreso High School.[94] Joe Esparza, son of José's son José or "Pepe" now teaches history at Pace High School in Brownsville.[95] The two daughters of Arnold Treviño (himself the son of José's

daughter Natalia) are graduates of the University of California at Berkeley; one is now a magazine editor in Boston, and the other is an official for Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco. Arnold's sister Natalia is a school nurse at the Rangerville School in San Benito.[96] Otis Powers (son of Patricia, the daughter of José's daughter Natalia) is on the Brownsville Independent School District School Board, and his brother Tyrone Powers is an algebra teacher and coach at Brownsville's Hanna High School.[97]

José's Death

José died on 19 September 1926,[98] reportedly of a stroke that occurred while he was checking his railroad investment records.[99] While his father Carlos had lived for fifty-seven years, José lived for seventy-one years.[100] He was widely mourned.[101] He was buried in La Encantada's Esparza family Cemetery on Esparza-Domanski Highway (a segment of the Old Military Highway) and Encantada Circle in the *pueblito* of El Ranchito.[102] The cemetery is a Texas landmark.[103] He and his wife lie with his parents in their large white mausoleum, surrounded by the graves of other family members. A park was built in his memory by the community on the Military Highway next to his church at El Ranchito, dedicated on 23 November of 1970.[104]

It is said that one of life's curses is being born the son of a great man. It is an oft-told tale in history, that of sons driven to drink and misery due to not being able to escape a parental shadow. So the opposite case, that of a son who appreciates an outstanding father, emulates him, completes his goals, [105] and continues his impact is all the more admirable. José had a major influence over his own children and grandchildren, who remember in love what a great man he was and are committed in their turn to carrying on the long-term ideals of their family.[106] José left behind a profound positive impact on the Rio Grande Valley as a role model for coming generations of Hispanics and Anglos alike. He should never be forgotten.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1 "Senator Lucio to Honor San Benito Historical Figure Don Jose Esparza," Media Advisory of State Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. District 27, http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/members/dist27/pr05/m072905a.htm

2 "Senator Lucio to Honor San Benito Historical Figure Don Jose Esparza," Media Advisory of State Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. District 27, http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/members/dist27/pr05/m072905a.htm

3 Carlos Larralde, *Carlos Esparza: A Chicano Chronicle* (San Francisco: R. & E. Research Associates, Inc., 1977), p. 4.

4 Interview by Milo Kearney with Arnold Treviño, a grandson of José Esparza, on 5 September 2005.

5 "Encantada Elementary School History," *San Benito News*, 30 August 1970, http://www.sanbenito.k12.tx.us/schools/Encantada/ee_his.html.

6 "Department of Tamaulipas to Jose Maria Villareal, Heirs of Matias Garcia, Miguel Cavazos. Title of Possession. Dated: April 8th, 1843. Filed: Dec. 31st, 1847. Recorded: Vol. "G", Pg. 192-194, Supplemental Deed Records, Cameron County, Texas. Abstract of Title to the following described Real Estate. Rice Tract Subdivision in the San Pedro de Carricitos Grant, in Cameron County, Texas. Brownsville Title Company, Brownsville, Texas.

7 José's tombstone in La Encantada Cemetery in El Ranchito, San Benito, gives the dates of 1855 to 1927 for his life. However, the dates are given as 1856 to 1926 in the certificate entitled "Senator Lucio to Honor San Benito Historical Figure Don Jose Esparza," Media Advisory of State Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. District 27, http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/members/dist27/pr05/m072905a.htm and as 8 July 1856 by Carlos Larralde in *The Handbook of Texas Online*, http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/EE/fesrj_print.html; also information provided by Margie Esparaza, mother of Roman "Dino" Esparza, in a telephone interview with Milo Kearney on 13 May 2006.

8 "Encantada Elementary School History," *San Benito News*, 30 August 1970, http://www.sanbenito.k12.tx.us/schools/Encantada/ee_his.html.

9 Taken from a genealogical list of the descendents of Carlos Esparza provided by Margie Esparza.

10 Record of Marriage of the Catholic Archives of Texas, sent by Susan Eason (1600 North Congress, P. O. Box 13124, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711) for the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Brownsville, 30 January 1850.

11 Carlos Larralde, *Carlos Esparza: A Chicano Chronicle*, pp. 15-16 and 51.

12 Taken from a genealogical list of the descendents of Carlos Esparza provided by Margie Esparza.

13 Carlos Larralde, "Esparza, José," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/EE/fesrj_print.html.

14 Record of Marriage of the Catholic Archives of Texas, sent by Susan Eason (1600 North Congress, P. O. Box 13124, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711) for the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Brownsville, 9 December 1877.

15 Interview by Milo Kearney with Arnold Treviño on 5 September 2005.

16 Taken from a genealogical list of the descendents of Carlos Esparza provided by Margie Esparza.

17 Interview by Milo Kearney with Arnold Treviño on 5 September 2005.

18 Dates given for Virginia's life and death on the family tomb in La Encantada Cemetery in El Ranchito, San Benito and "Obituaries," 16 November 2005, *Valley Morning Star* of Harlingen, Texas, http://www.valleystar.com/articles/2005/12/13/obituaries.

19 Record of Marriage of the Catholic Archives of Texas, sent by Susan Eason (1600 North Congress, P. O. Box 13124, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711) for the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Brownsville, 28 December 1895.

20 Taken from a genealogical list of the descendents of Carlos Esparza provided by Margie Esparza.

21 Interview by Milo Kearney with José Enrique ("Joe") Esparza, Jr., on 28 November 2005.

22 Interview by Milo Kearney with Arnold Treviño on 5 September 2005.

23 Interview by Milo Kearney with José Enrique ("Joe") Esparza, Jr., on 28 November 2005.

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The R.B. Creager and Carlos G. Watson Papers Come to the Hunter Room

by

John Hawthorne

When my job as University Archivist and Manager of Special Collections for the UTB/TSC partnership made it necessary for me to gain a greater knowledge of Brownsville history I sought out those experts I could find and interviewed them about the best way to document local history and culture. One of those I interviewed was the esteemed Bruce Aiken who wrote many books and articles on Brownsville and for whom a room is now named in memoriam at the Brownsville Heritage Complex. Aiken had many good ideas of how to improve the Hunter Room of the UTB/TSC library.

In 2000, Mr. Aiken informed me of many famous people who have lived in Brownsville through the years and offered me much helpful advice as to how to preserve Brownsville history and what was important and what was not. The person he most recommended to know about and document was R.B. Creager, who lived from 1877-1950. My first thought was, "Who was he?" I learned that Creager was a local business and political leader, and that his son had served as mayor of Brownsville. I also learned that he was a powerful Republican, a fact which didn't seem to fit with Brownsville or Texas of the era. Aiken implored me to find his papers, saying that he personally knew Creager and that he was "quite a man." I appreciated the advice, but thought it impossible to find the papers of a man who had been dead for fifty years with no known relatives in Brownsville.

In early Summer of 2005, my assistant, Javier Garcia, made contact with the executor of an estate that owned an unused law office filled with old books and papers. She wanted us to see what we

thought of the books and how she could sell them. After seeing the books, many of them beautiful old classics, I knew the university should make an offer for the collection. We have added over 1,000 of them to the UTB/TSC library collection. Then I entered the file room behind the main office and found what Bruce Aiken five years earlier had asked me to find, the papers of R.B. Creager.

We were in the law office of Carlos G. Watson (1897-1991), who, like Creager, was a prominent Brownsville attorney, Republican, and real-estate investor, who owned (among other holdings) what was once known as the Stegman building at 11th and Washington in downtown Brownsville. He was later joined by his son, Carlos Watson, Jr. Watson had been a personal and political friend of Creager as well as serving as his attorney.

Watson wrote a letter to a researcher from Northwestern University explaining the whole situation of how the papers appeared in his office. He stated that he was the executor of Creager's estate and handled financial matters for his widow Alice Creager. All of Creager's personal files were sent to Watson's office after his death. We know that some of his books were sent as well, due to his name being written in them or printed on the outer cover. For some reason Watson refused the researchers request for help with a biography of Creager, stating that the records were all destroyed in a fire. Whatever is the truth of the fire story, many valuable items remain.

The R.B. Creager papers cover the whole of Creager's life. We have his records from when he served as the Brownsville Customs Collector under Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. His 1916 run for Governor of Texas as a Republican is not well documented, but his other service to the Republican Party is. There is correspondence documenting his relationship with President Warren Harding and his activities as a conduit for political patronage for those rare Texas Republicans before World War II. One can consider who Creager thought should

be postmaster of San Antonio, and what Harding's White House thought of the idea.

Creagers's support was crucial to 1920 Republican Presidential Candidate Warren Harding. In fact, he delivered the only seconding speech to Harding's nomination in 1920. Harding and his wife visited Brownsville, and stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Creager in the days after the election but before the inauguration. Brownsville was excited by the honor. There was a parade and much in the way of festivities. The glamour factor was such that Mrs. Evelyn Walsh McLean wore the famous "Hope Diamond" as part of the presidential party. The Hardings and Creagers also visited Port Isabel for a fishing trip. At this time, Creager was engaged with Republican Congressman Harry Wurzbach of San Antonio for control of the Texas Republican Party. Harding's visit showed his preference, and proved where the real power in Texas was. This presidential visit to Brownsville would continue to be important to Brownsville for many years and is featured prominently in *Brownsville: A Pictorial History* done by the Brownsville Historical Association in the 1980s. Bruce Aiken mentioned its importance in 2000.

This struggle with Wurzbach for control of the Republican Party throughout the 1920s led many contemporaries to believe that Creager was more interested in controlling the political patronage distributed in Texas than in actually electing candidates to office. Wurzbach was a rare Republican who won election to the US House of Representatives from the San Antonio area in staunchly Democratic Texas. The bulk of the politically related papers in the collection of documents do relate to political patronage, but to me its hard, looking back, to determine with certainty Creager's motives.

Creager's political career took an interesting turn in September, 1923, when *Time Magazine* reported that he was soon to be nominated as Ambassador to Mexico. Indeed, Creager had many business and personal dealings in Mexico. Creager would refuse

this offer and a similar offer from President Calvin Coolidge. He seems to have thought that he could do his best public service as a party leader in Brownsville. Others theorize that he refused to leave his beloved hometown.

Creager appears to have had a dislike of the infamous Ku Klux Klan. In 1920, when he first became head of the Republican Party State Executive Committee, after his gubernatorial run in 1916, he worked to condemn the KKK in no uncertain terms in the 1920 Texas State Platform. Paul Casdorph, who authored *The Republican Party of Texas*, a book frequently used in this article, wrote that the KKK condemnation was greeted with "loud and prolonged cheering" by the Convention. Creager directly challenged Democratic Senate Candidate Earl Mayfield, who was famously a member of the Klan.

In 1924, Creager again ensured that anti-KKK language would be in the Texas Republican Party Platform. It is difficult to ascertain whether Creager was motivated to fight the racial and religious intolerance of the Klan or to differentiate his party from the Democrats, who were having an internal battle at the time of whether to be pro-Klan. Creager did have many positive relationships with persons with Spanish surnames and Catholic religious beliefs, as is shown by his correspondence. He appeared to have been bilingual, as he wrote letters partly or entirely in Spanish. Surely this would not have endeared him to Klan supporters. His relationships with African Americans, if any, are unknown. What is known is that it took a certain amount of courage for a man engaged in a fight for control of a state-wide party to vigorously challenge an organization that had very high support in Texas as well as nationally. I like to think that Creager was at least in part motivated by the best ideals in the so called "Party of Lincoln."

R.B. Creager did not leave his quest at the state level, but delved into national controversy in 1924 with an effort to get an anti-Ku Klux Klan plank placed in the Republican Party national

platform. Unfortunately, those advocating the timid approach won the day and no plank was inserted. However, Creager drew the ire of Democratic Senator James T. Heflin of Alabama, who, in 1925, attempted to link Creager to the Harding financial scandals, which were much in the news at the time. Creager did appear to come out the winner in this fight, and he successfully argued that Heflin's links to the Klan caused the attacks on his ethics.

We have in the UTB/TSC library a set of 521 letters written by various persons of importance related to Heflin's charges, which were brought up on the floor of the United States Senate. The lead letter is written by the Postmaster General of the United States, and attests to the falseness of the charges and to Creager's good character. Most of the other letters were in response to Creager's sending a copy of the Postmaster General's letter to others. The book of letters is bound in red leather, and was evidently very prized by him.

As compelling as the political papers are, the bulk of the Creager items have to do with his financial records. He was president of Ilind Oil, a company chartered in Indiana, but having extensive dealings in Texas. There is much correspondence and many financial reports on this company. I find it interesting that Creager and so many early Texas Republicans were oil men. Even today both President Bush and Vice-President Cheney have had oil business careers. It is even more interesting that so many Democrats of today denounce "big oil."

The Gateway International Bridge changed Brownsville and Matamoros forever with the increased ability to move both people and goods between the two cities. It sits perhaps three blocks from where I write this paper. Little did I realize before studying R.B. Creager that he was the man principally responsible for its construction. Creager, along with a group of investors, decided to build a bridge connecting the two communities. The papers documents how he sought funding and issued bonds in New York to finance the construction of the bridge and its customs house

and administration area. Also included are many years of records documenting the Gateway International Bridge Company's financial situation.

Creager's financial dealings, as well as those of his wife Alice after he died in 1950, are well documented. We have checking, savings, business, land, and corporate, as well as loan records. Carlos Watson managed the estate, as well as the financial dealings of his widow, Alice Creager, for many years.

R.B. Creager's story could not be told but for his friendship with Carlos G. Watson and the decision of the heirs of the Watson estate to sell books and papers to the UTB/TSC partnership. The heirs later donated books and other items to the library that further document the extraordinary early Texas Republicans in Brownsville. Carlos Watson was a protégé of Creager in the Party, and did much for it in the early 20th century. He was a delegate to the National Convention in at least the years 1932, 1936, 1944, and 1948. He served on the National Party's Rules and Order of Business Committee in 1940.

Unlike Creager, who quit running for elected office after his unsuccessful gubernatorial run in 1916, Watson sought office several times. In 1930, he ran for the United States House of Representatives from the most southern district in Texas. The allegations against Creager of nominating candidates not interested in winning were untrue in Watson's case. The library possesses an extraordinary notebook chronicling the 1930 race and much more in South Texas politics. Watson studied the towns and counties of the district. He took notes of who ran the newspapers and churches of the towns and how he might influence them. He looked at voting returns from previous elections and took particular comfort in Herbert Hoover's 1928 election victory in Texas in the Presidential Race. Watson even wrote that he felt the election would be won or lost in the Rio Grande Valley. Watson was overly optimistic, for he lost badly to future Vice-President of the United States John Nance Garner.

Watson continued his efforts to obtain elected office, and was the Republican Candidate for the U.S. Senate in 1936. In 1956, he again sought election as a U.S. Senator from Texas. Interestingly, five years later, a Texas Republican, John Tower, did win election to the U.S. Senate in a Special Election. Watson served as Secretary of the State Executive Committee of the Republican Party for many years, beginning in the Creager era. This position brought him into prominence at the state level, but also caused some problems. He was sued in 1952 by Emily Haley Garoni for his efforts to allow the Texas Republican Party to be allies of Republican Presidential Candidate Robert Taft. She was seeking $10,000 from Watson, although I am unsure how she could have proven personal financial harm. In 1952, Watson was also named General Counsel of the Republican Party of Texas. This service is documented in the collection in folders of correspondence from his work in this position.

There is, of course, far more of value in the R.B. Creager and Carlos G. Watson papers than what is mentioned in this brief paper. Some of the books of National Republican Party Conventions bear the gilt written name of Lena Gay More. She was another powerful Republican of the era and a close associate of Creager. Brownsville and Texas History are fortunate that these previously unknown papers exist. Mr. Creager's business dealings were varied, and his accomplishments in Mexico and Brownsville are very relevant to this day. The papers also tell the story of a time when in Brownsville resided two key members of a small political party that seemed to struggle against impossible odds in a Democratic-dominated state. Today we know that their efforts helped lead to a state dominated by Republicans to a degree similar to that of the Democratic stranglehold of the past. Efforts are being made to organize the Creager/Watson papers at the time of this writing and to make them accessible to researchers wanting to do a more in-depth analysis of this collection. We will continue to seek out historical collections at the UTB/TSC library and add to the study of Rio Grande Valley History.

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Henry Gordon: A Life Devoted to Law Enforcement in Brownsville

by

Elizandro Muñoz, Jr.

Henry Gordon left his native California forever to live his life in Brownsville, Texas. Gordon was born in San Francisco, California on Christmas Eve 1886. He was of average build and certainly not imposing by any measure. Yet, Mr. Gordon left an enduring mark on his adapted home of Brownsville. Mr. Gordon was very talented linguistically, being able to speak English, Spanish, and French. Throughout his law enforcement career he was characterized as being both very proficient and dependable. A young Henry Gordon first arrived in Brownsville as a member of the 14th United States Cavalry at Fort Brown. He would serve the Brownsville area for over three decades, as a member of either the Brownsville Police Department or the Cameron County Sheriff's Department. His service endured until the end of Fort Brown's military life. Incidentally, portions of the original Fort Brown, which had brought a young Henry Gordon here, were later incorporated in the mid-1940s as the headquarters for the Brownsville Police Department.

At the time of his arrival, Brownsville was experiencing a military buildup, largely due to the illegal activity on the United States and Mexican border. The period from 1915 through 1918 is known in the area as the bandit era. Border raids by Mexican bandits wreaked havoc along the border communities. Fort Brown had been closed since the infamous Brownsville Raid in 1906. Now, both State and Federal troops were stationed at Fort Brown due to hostilities across the border in Matamoros. "When Huerta partisans seized control of Matamoros after the overthrow of Madero, the Cameron County sheriff asked the captain of the local militia, known as the Brownsville Rifles, to have his men stand ready for patrol duty, fearing that Mexicans operating under the guise of rebels might try to enter Brownsville 'with marauding

intentions'."[1] Hostilities were such that Texas Governor Colquitt authorized Brownsville officials to "notify the Mexican commander at Matamoros ... that if he harms a single Texan, his life will be demanded in forfeit."[2] In January, 1915, the Plan of San Diego was discovered. The plot sought to ultimately detach the southwestern states from the United States to form a new Mexican republic. This added to the ongoing tensions on the border city of Brownsville, which Henry Gordon was sworn to protect. Two prominent Brownsville natives, Luis de la Rosa and Aniceto Pizaña, published an article in Mexican newspapers calling for a return to Mexico of the territory conquered by the United States in the Mexican-American War. This brought concern to the local residents, causing some to flee the area. Bandit raids and smuggling were common along the border. Smuggling was a big problem, especially during the Prohibition Era. The United States Customs organized an elite group of mounted patrolmen to discourage smuggling along the Rio Grande and assist local authorities. Yet, the smuggling continued. One recorded account details just how bold smugglers were in defying the law. "Smugglers advised customs officials, Shears and Campbell, that they would cross a tremendous load of liquor. Three hours later they paraded past the Post Office where Campbell and Shears were stationed. However, the customs officials could do nothing against the strength of the smugglers."[3] Federal troops would remain stationed at Fort Brown in part to help stabilize the border until it was permanently closed in 1944.

The years leading up to the United States involvement in World War I were indeed dangerous in Brownsville during Henry Gordon's service. He had begun to serve in 1913 as a Lieutenant in the Brownsville Police Department. He then served as Chief of Police up to the time war was declared. The year 1917 would signal the beginning of the United States involvement in World War I, as well as Mr. Gordon's involvement in France. An intercepted telegram, the Zimmerman Telegram, had revealed that Germany had proposed to Carranza's government in Mexico that Germany and Mexico jointly declare war on the United States. Mexico in turn would regain Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. Hostilities on the border prevailed and calm would not

return to the area until about 1920, after the Mexican Revolution had run its course. In the Fall of 1917, Mr. Gordon left overseas for service in the War. Mr. Gordon served for sixteen months in the Division of Criminal Investigation as a plain clothes operator attached to the French Army. This was just another form of law enforcement that would be included in Mr. Gordon's impressive career. His Criminal Investigators Identity-Pass Card issued by the Provost Marshall General's Office states "he is authorized to proceed in the course of his duties, either in plain clothes or uniform, by day or night ... it is requested that assistance be given him by all authorities in the performance of his duties."[4]

The authority given to Mr. Gordon seems impressive for someone who had been out of the military for a couple of years. Sergeant Gordon served in the 1st Army Headquarters Regiment, Company H. in France. While in France, Brownsville was described to Sergeant Gordon as being quiet. In a letter from Brownsville Police Chief W.B. Linton it states, "Brownsville is pretty quiet now, since all the saloons have been closed. Every saloon within ten miles of a post or camp was closed on April 15th, and on June 26th they will close all over the state and remain closed as long as the war lasts."[5] During the Prohibition years, Brownsville actually became a popular point of entry into Mexico, attracting people who wanted to have a drink in Matamoros. Smuggling, always an important industry, experienced its peak at this time because it was an important crossing point for illegal liquor. The letter goes on to say, "All the Boys on the force were glad to learn that you were O.K. and all wish to be remembered to you."[6] Interestingly, the letter mentions how the police chief has hung a "service flag" with seven stars over the door, and will have to add one more for old Oscar ... who has been called to the colors. This apparently was a custom to honor those that had been "called to the colors" or, better stated, called to serve in the Armed Forces as Gordon had. Chief Linton then briefly mentions how the Sheriffs Department is somewhat slow in showing their solidarity. He states "The Sheriffs Department has been unable to hang a flag yet. The Capt. has his same old bunch and they still stick to their old habits."[7] Again, this letter makes is seem that

Brownsville was quiet from the point of view of both the Brownsville Police Department and the Cameron County Sheriffs Department. It is interesting to see how he states the Captain and his same old bunch still stick to their old habits. This portrays the Sheriffs Department as old fashioned and perhaps antiquated in their law enforcement as well. I now mention a Mr. Tate who apparently is a mutual acquaintance because his name will again appear in another letter to Mr. Gordon describing an incident in Brownsville from Chief Linton. This I believe might have played a role in a decision Mr. Gordon makes later in life that affected his law enforcement career. Chief Linton briefly states, "Mr. Tate is stationed in Brownsville again, he took Frank Gays place after Frank was called to the colors."[8]

After the end of World War I, Mr. Gordon for some reason chose not to return to work in the Brownsville Police Department. Instead he worked as a Field Superintendent in Mexican oil fields for the Tide Water Company. His years of service with the Tide Water Company were from approximately July 1919 until September 1923. It is unclear why Mr. Gordon chose to work for the Tide Water Company. My conclusion is that either the pay was considerably better than law enforcement, or perhaps he was moved by the incident involving the previously mentioned Mr. Tate. The conclusion is strengthened by the fact that he was promised a job and was told he was needed badly. In a letter from the Brownsville Chief of Police W.B. Linton dated May 13, 1919, the Police Chief is promising Mr. Gordon a job. "Upon your return to the United States I can again use you on the Police force in this city. I always considered you particularly well fitted for that class of work and I hope to hear of your return soon. If possible to get your discharge from the Army now that the war is practically over, do so, as I need your assistance here in Brownsville badly. The Mayor and the City Manager would also like to see you back here as soon as possible."[9] The same letter also mentions the incident involving the previously mentioned Mr. Tate. "Regarding the killing of Mr. Tate. On August 31 last, while returning to Brownsville with Mr. Adkins, an Inspector of Customs, they passed a wagon containing contraband. They turned around, and as the car stopped Mr. Tate stepped out,

and when he did so he was shot through the head with a rifle by the smugglers who were hiding in the bushes on the side of the road. I regret to say the smugglers escaped. Mr. Tate's death was a hard blow to me and we all feel the loss very much."[10] This perhaps was a hard blow to Mr. Gordon as well, and could have briefly driven him away from law enforcement. Maybe Brownsville seemed far from quiet, and he felt he needed a different kind of challenge before deciding to return to law enforcement.

During his absence in the oil fields his temporary address was listed as Tampico, Mexico, on his United States passport. He later filed for an extension of his passport from the American Consul at Matamoros to include "visiting Columbia, Bolivia and Peru, South America, in connection with the development of petroleum fields."[11] After his absence in the oil fields Mr. Gordon worked on and off for either the Cameron County Sheriffs Department, Brownsville Police Department, or Brownsville Port Authority. Upon his return to Brownsville in 1923, Mr. Gordon again joined the Brownsville Police Department up through December 1929. In early 1930 he then went to work as a Cameron County Deputy Sheriff under Sheriff W.F. Brown. While serving in the Sheriff's Department he apparently was not afraid to use lethal force in the name of the law. In a letter from Mr. Gordon addressed to the Warden of the State Penitentiary in Huntsville, Texas. He states "This is to inform you that on the 1st day of June 1931, I shot and killed Teodora Galvan, while resisting arrest ..."[12] He then mentions that he had also apprehended a second suspect (Eleuterio Guerrero) and was holding him pending further information. He requested that if a reward had been offered for either of the suspects it be allowed to him. In 1932 Mr. Gordon was promoted to Chief Deputy Sheriff of Cameron County, and would serve as such until December 1934.

George Westervelt, the former Cameron County District Attorney and then a presiding Judge of a County Court, described Mr. Gordon's service in an excerpt from a letter of recommendation dated October 3, 1934. "He and I had occasion to investigate and successfully prosecute many cases of the grade of felony during those years. By

observation and daily contact with him during the terms of this court, I have found the work of Mr. Gordon as a peace officer to be accurate, reliable and satisfactory, and I take pleasure in recommending him to you for the position which he seeks."[13] His position with the Cameron County Sheriffs Department was lost due to the political defeat of Sheriff Brown. Mr. Gordon was now seeking a position as a Mounted Customs Officer.

The area had experienced a steady growth in the volume of legal trade, and, after completion of the Port of Brownsville in 1936, Brownsville emerged as one of the leading shipping points on the Texas coast. Mr. Gordon served as a mounted Customs Officer at the Port of Brownsville until early 1940. Captain Ruben S. Garcia, Brownsville Police Department (Retired), states Henry Gordon was part of a "breed all by themselves, a different breed who rode with the political punches,"[14] referring to how he managed to remain employed in law enforcement by riding the political changes in local government. Captain Garcia was very clear in his dissatisfaction of the role politics played in law enforcement. He said law enforcement and politics should not mix, and not depend on each other. He attributes law enforcement relying on politics in this era, because those working in law enforcement as a profession were not considered to be "professionals". They could not survive the political changes in local government, regardless of their skills or experience.

On May 22, 1940, Mr. Gordon returned to the Brownsville Police Department and was appointed Chief of Police by the City Manager. "You are hereby directed to take charge of the police office, the management of the police force and all city property which has been in the possession of Mr. John McRay."[15] In a second letter dated May 22, 1940 Mr. Gordon was given his first assignment. Commencement night at the High School was being held that same day, and there was some concern with an expected increase in traffic and other perceived problems. "Rumors have come to me that certain mischievous boys are going to try to pull off some funny stuff, so in a careful way stop anything of that kind and use caution during the ceremonies." He was told he could use two or three firemen for the traffic. Apparently

the use of firemen for assistance to the police department was quite common since they were "uniformed". The owning of a uniform apparently was also sufficient to serve in law enforcement. "Since you will be short of men, especially at night, you are herewith authorized to employ Tomas Cavazos, since he has a uniform, at a salary not to exceed $3 per day."

Captain Garcia was ready to point out that he did not agree with people being able to work in law enforcement simply because they had a uniform. According to Captain Garcia up to recent times most of the equipment used in law enforcement such as uniforms, guns, holsters and even ammunition had to be provided by the individuals themselves. Law enforcement officers during this era were clearly not "professionals" in the sense they are today. The letter then states "In case you run short of men you may call on the fire department for one or two uniformed men who understand police work." On November 18, 1941, Mr. Gordon was officially name Chief of Police. According to the newspaper article no one had served officially as Brownsville Police Chief since the discharge of John McRay in May 1940. The department had been operating short-handed, Chief Gordon said. In a Brownsville Herald article the following week Mr. Gordon requested an increase of four policemen. He stated that fourteen were now employed and that eighteen were needed to efficiently operate the department. He also asked for two new patrol cars to replace aging patrol cars, and for building repairs. Apparently the police department headquarters had not been painted since 1935. His official appointment clearly gave him more leverage to bring the department up to date. After decades of service his requests commanded credibility and were honored as requested. He served as Chief of Police until late 1943. These were trying times in Brownsville; Mr. Gordon had served on and off for over three decades, but much remained the same. "Despite the bitterness of the political struggles in Brownsville in the early 1940's, the issues were traditional issues of local government: taxes, debt, public services and patronage."[17]

It is hard for one to understand how a person with such high recommendations throughout his career constantly had to struggle

to remain employed in law enforcement. His service was always recognized as being very good. Even at the end of his career in 1943 he was still being highly recommended. The most recent letter from the City Manager, dated November 9, 1943 states, "Mr. Gordon's services have at all times been entirely satisfactory and he has always borne a good reputation."[18] Captain Garcia's statement regarding how law enforcement and politics should never mix is worthy of note. Even though law enforcement officers were truly not "professionals" by today's standards, Mr. Henry Gordon was clearly experienced and worthy of such title. He had on occasion used deadly force in the name of the law, as well as claimed rewards for the capture of prison escapees. All par for the course of his job. But, above all he was a fair person. He states "I am inclined to show clemency ... especially where there has not been too serious an offence."[19] I get a sense of him being a noble person, one who was truly devoted to his job, and remained faithful to his love of the job till the latter years of his life. "At this time I have retired from politics due to ill health, but I still take to a certain extent active parts in old cases in which I was interested ..."[20] Surprisingly, Mr. Gordon refers to his profession as being politics. A person, who had devoted his life to law enforcement, realized that politics had played a large role in his ability to remain employed in law enforcement. Mr. Henry Gordon passed away after a lengthy illness in Brownsville at Mercy Hospital in 1953. The newspaper article stated that only his wife, Elizabeth, survived him. No mention of any other family members was made.

It is sad that such an honorable person, who had devoted his lifetime to Brownsville, would not have family to carry on his story, after his wife's death. He had left his native California, and served Brownsville honorably, and certainly is worthy of recognition. He was praised for his dedication to his job throughout his career. He served during trying times in this border city, and endured. I am honored to have had an opportunity to retell his story. I had the rare opportunity to hold in my hands three of the law enforcement badges that Henry Gordon had worn with pride. All three badges, Cameron County Deputy Sheriff,

Chief Deputy Sheriff, and Chief of Police, bore his name. I am glad to report that in the course of my research I discovered that there is an effort to build a law enforcement museum that would house Henry Gordon's personal effects, among others. Brownsville will remember this adopted son, whose life was devoted to law enforcement and serving the community.

Endnotes

1 Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville (Austin: Eakin Press, 1991), p. 214.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Raul Besteiro (ed.), *The History of Brownsville, Matamoros and their environs*, with articles written by Brownsville High School students and edited by the school Principal (Brownsville, Brownsville High School, 1966), p. 8.

4 Criminal Investigator's Identity-Pass Card, No. 563, Name- Henry Gordon, Rank Sergeant, Serial No. 2392480.

5 Letter from W.B. Linton to Henry Gordon, 23 May 1918.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 Letter from W.B. Linton to Henry Gordon, 13 May 1919.

10 *Ibid.*

11 United States Passport of Henry Gordon, 30 June 1920.

12 Letter from Henry Gordon, 5 June 1931.

13 Letter from George Westervelt to Henry Gordon, 3 October 1934.

14 Personal Interview, Captain Ruben S. Garcia, Brownsville Police Department (Retired), 26 February 2002.

15 Letter from Robert Runyon to Henry Gordon, 22 May 1940.

16 Letter from Robert Runyon to Henry Gordon, 25 May 1940.

17 Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp., *Border Cuates: A History of the U.S. - Mexican Twin Cities* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1995).

18 Letter from A.E. Munday, 9 November 1943.

19 Letter from Henry Gordon, 17 March 1945.

20 *Ibid.*

An Interview with Antonio M. Ramírez

by

Rolando L. Garza

This article is based on a video-taped oral interview conducted by me with Antonio M. Ramírez on June 19, 2004, in the backyard of his house on Tony's Road. I originally chose Mr. Ramírez as my subject because of his rich history in Conjunto Music as a bajo sexto player. Fortunately, Mr. Ramírez's wife, Isabel de León Ramírez, participated in the interview, and we were able to draw on both of them to get some interesting images of life during the first half of the twentieth century in the Brownsville area. During the interview, we were able to record some musical numbers representative of the traditional conjunto music. The other musicians who played and participated in the interview were Alfonso "Chito" Cortez and Hipolito Gracia. Since this interview had two dimensions, musical and the personal, I will divide this brief summary accordingly, first presenting the life stories of Antonio Ramírez and his wife Isabel de León, and then presenting Mr. Ramírez' musical life and career.

The Life Story

Antonio M. Ramírez was born on February 21, 1916, at his home located in an area known as El Puente de Los Negros. His house was approximately two blocks east of old Highway 77, near a resaca north of present-day Alton Gloor Road. When he was born, Highway 77 was still a dirt road from San Benito to Brownsville. El Puente de Los Negros was known by this name because it was constructed by an all-black work crew, and that is the name given for his place of birth on his birth certificate. Antonio had two brothers and four sisters.

Mrs. Ramírez, Isabel de León, was born on March 24, 1924, in Olmito. Isabel had nine sisters and three brothers. Mrs. Ramírez remembers her father, Ildefonso de León, as a great outdoorsman,

who always had wild game for the table to supplement the produce they grew and the livestock they raised themselves. Her father worked on the river boats from the mouth of the Rio Grande up to Laredo prior to the turn of the century. After that, he worked as a driver for the stagecoach that ran between Brownsville and Alice. In 1936, her family moved into Brownsville on Madison Street.

When asked about how they met and courted, they informed me that they were from old families in the area and everybody knew each other. They did not recall meeting each other; they just remembered knowing each other since they were very young. In any case, on December 15, 1940, Isabel de León and Antonio Ramírez were married at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral. They recalled that it rained heavily on the Saturday night before their wedding, and that Mrs. Larry Lightner (Camille), for whom Isabel's sister worked as a *nana*, was gracious enough to pick her up in an automobile and take her to the church. At that time, only the core area of downtown Brownsville had paved streets, so many guests had trouble getting to the wedding, getting stuck in the mud. Mrs. Ramírez interjected a fond memory of the traffic lights that had bells that would ring when the lights were going to change.

During the interview, both Mr. and Mrs. Ramírez recounted stories of their childhood. Mrs. Ramírez talked about growing up in rural Cameron County in the late twenties and thirties. She recalled how they raised livestock, chicken and pigs, and cultivated a variety of produce so that they could be self sufficient. She remembered that they would slaughter a pig once or twice a year, eating the meat, saving the grease (*la manteca*), and making *chorizo* (sausage) that they would dry to preserve it throughout the year (as they had neither refrigeration nor electricity). She was not clear on why, but she also remembered her parents trained her siblings and herself to avoid and fear the soldiers from Fort Brown.

Mr. Ramírez also recounted stories of his childhood in rural Cameron County. He mentioned that, when he was growing up, his family had a wood burning stove, but remembers that his

grandfather's house had a fireplace for cooking constructed of wood and mud, with a flue constructed of cane. Mr. Ramírez also shared memories of attending *bailes de regalo* during the twenties. At these dances, the ladies would sit around the dance area, leaving an opening for the men to stand while they waited for the music to start. Women had to dance with whoever selected them. The custom was that, when a gentleman asked a lady to dance, he would have to compensate her with a small token or gift, which generally consisted of candy or cookies. He remembered how he and his brothers and sisters sat beneath the benches and got all the goodies that their mom received.

In brief, Mr. and Mrs. Ramírez relayed many stories about growing up and living in this area during the first half of the twentieth century. Their stories ranged from going to Matamoros during the nineteen-twenties, through crossing on a ferry near Levee Street and then riding on a small-gauge rail trolley pulled by a *burro*, selling produce at the open-air market in Brownsville during the nineteen-thirties, and surviving the hurricane of 1933, to experiencing the Great Depression and World War II. Overall, these stories created a vivid image of everyday life in Cameron County during the first half of the twentieth century.

Antonio M. Ramírez's Musical Story

Mr. Ramírez got his first guitar in 1931, at the age of fifteen, as a gift from his Aunt Angelita. The guitar had originally belonged to her dad, Antonio's granduncle, José Doria. This guitar was destroyed during the hurricane of 1933, but the following year he was able to buy his own guitar, for $1.50, from an Anglo family that lived in the area. He learned to play it, but did not really like it that much, and, in 1937, he bought his first bajo sexto. He received bajo sexto lessons from Santos Almeida, the brother of Santiago Almeida. Mr. Ramírez credits the legendary Santos Martínez, the brother of Narciso Martínez, for being the greatest influence over his *conjunto* music. Meanwhile, Antonio Ramírez' brother, Francisco, was learning how to play the accordion.

By the late thirties, Antonio and Francisco's "Ramírez Brothers' Conjunto" was playing at weddings, baptismals, parties, and feasts. Their fee for five hours of playing was $1.50. They played both in Brownsville and in Matamoros, and also traveled to Corpus Christi to perform. The Ramírez Brothers were definitely one of the pioneer groups of *Tejano conjunto* music in the Rio Grande Valley, as this musical style began to solidify. Mr. Ramírez stated that he had had the privilege to know and play with Narciso Martínez, Chuy Villegas, Juan López, Raul "El Ruco" Martínez, Genaro "La Crilla" García, José Moreno, and others.

Antonio and Francisco Ramírez continued to work in agriculture to subsist, performing mainly to satisfy their passion for music. Once Antonio was married and had two children, he was committed to continue the arduous work in the fields because he wanted to be with his family and give his children the opportunity to get an education. It was probably because he never committed to the life of a musician that he never recorded any music. Nonetheless, Mr. Ramírez would never have changed a thing, because he felt that his family was far more precious than his music.

The "Ramírez Brothers' Conjunto" continued to perform at various dances and fiestas through the fifties. But *conjunto* music had undergone many changes during the late forties, with the "Nueva Generación" of artists like Valerio Longoria. By the end of the nineteen-fifties, the traditional form of a two-piece *conjunto* band was no longer in demand. Despite this, the Ramírez brothers continued to play their music.

In August of 1983, Narciso Martínez invited Mr. Ramírez to travel to play with him for President Ronald Reagan, but due to medical concerns he was not permitted to make the trip. However, in November of 1985, Narciso Martínez was recognized at the KERA radio station in Dallas, and he had the honor of accompanying *"El Huracán del Valle"* to that event. While a brief history of Narciso was narrated, their music was played in the background.

Recently, Antonio Ramírez had been enjoying passing on the traditional *conjunto* Music to his great-grandson, Rodolfo García, Jr., who had decided to learn the accordion. He also had been playing on a weekly basis with his nephew, Alfonso Cortez, and his *compadre*, Hipolito Gracia, in the comfort of his home and backyard. His only wish was that "our new generations don't forget the good old-time music." And that "such pieces of music as the *jota*, shotis, mazurka, camelina, *danza*, *danza docha*, *contra danza*, *redova*, polka, and the *paso doble* are not forgotten." Antonio Ramírez died on December 3, 2006. He had lived a full life of ninety years and touched many people's lives with his music and friendship. He would want to be remembered as much for being a good father, husband, and friend, as for being a pioneer of *conjunto* Music.

Rolando Hinojosa – Tejano Writer

by

Manuel Medrano

Américo Paredes, eminent folklorist and scholar, said about Rolando Hinojosa, "His humor, the way that he has created a fictional community, rather a whole county, the way he uses the language; he is truly bilingual. He stands out head and shoulders above other Mexico-Tejano writers."[1] Oscar Cisneros, Stanford graduate and formal student in Hinojosa's Literature of the Southwest class, says that Hinojosa challenges his students "to think critically and allows them to move through the culture."[2] For these reasons, students seek him out and respect him. Hinojosa once referred to Américo Paredes as *un hombre derecho*, a righteous man. His own life embodies that sentiment.

Rolando Hinojosa was born on the twenty-first of January, 1929, in Mercedes, Texas, a small town in the heart of the Rio Grande Valley along the U.S.-Mexico border. His father, Manuel Guzmán Hinojosa, was born at a ranch called *Campaquas* by the Mexicanos and Carter's Lake by the Anglos, just a few miles north of Mercedes. His mother, Carrie Effie Smith, a member of one of the oldest Texas Anglo families to come to the Valley, was born in Rockport, Texas. She came to the Valley when she was six years old.

It was good fortune that he was born into a family of readers. His parents read to each other, to his brothers and sisters, and to him. Their reading stimulated his early interest in reading, and nurtured it, which, in turn, enabled him to develop as a writer, for as he says, "If you wish to write, then you have to be a reader ... That's a life-long habit ... There's just so much imagination can take you ... You have to have a ground."[3] Additionally, because he lived in one place for a long time, he was able to know both the area and its people well. The culture was always with him. "Everyday the sun rose be-

hind the same palm tree and the sun set behind another palm tree. The stores, the houses, and the people were the same."[4] In these surroundings, Hinojosa started his writing early. At fifteen, he wrote "Estampas Arteagensas," a story about two *campesinos* from Arteaga, Coahuila, who were killed on orders from the Mexican government. It was symbolic of the violence and bloodshed in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. That same year, 1944, as a junior in high school, he submitted an essay to a high school writing competition called Creative Bits. It was selected for the collection. "I was hooked because not only were some of my essays accepted for the contest; one was given honorable mention."[5] Those essays, including "The Halloween Prankster" and others, are still on file at the Mercedes High School library.

During this time, Hinojosa developed a strong bilingual element in his writing. For nine months he attended a school which was monolingual English, and in the summers he lived in Mexico with relatives who spoke only Spanish. He describes that combination as "a nice symbiotic relationship."[6]

It was also during these years that Hinojosa became a voracious reader. He read not only traditional American literature produced by authors such as James Thurber, Dorothy Parker, and Edgar Allan Poe, but also articles in *The New Yorker*. These were complemented by articles written in Spanish by such Mexican-American writers as Pepe Díaz and Américo Paredes. They appeared in "Los Lunes Literarios," the Monday supplement for *La Prensa*, a San Antonio newspaper that Hinojosa at one time delivered as a paper route boy. Indeed, he says, "It's been a lifetime of study and interest."[7]

World War II left a strong impression on Hinojosa's life and on his writing. For six years, he was bombarded daily by articles in newspapers and Paramount News. "I was ten when Hitler and the Nazis invaded Poland, and I was sixteen when MacArthur signed the peace accord in September, 1945. I took an abiding interest in Europe and in the Orient, and it is reflected in my writing."[8]

After graduating from Mercedes High School, he decided to attend the University of Texas at Austin. His older brothers and sisters all had attended college. Unlike many other Mexican Americans of that period, Hinojosa never had any doubts about attending college, only about where to attend. "There was always talk about college, not about whether I was going to attend. That was a given. No question at all."[9]

The GI Bill helped, of course, as it did for many other Mexican-Americans at the time, because they could now receive monetary assistance if they were veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

His memories about his undergraduate years are generally pleasant ones, and he still has friends that he met when he attended the University of Texas. "Being from the Valley helped. If you come from the Valley, you know who you are and you know what you are. Most of the Mexican-Americans that attended when I was there were Valley people, and some of my Mexican-American roommates were from Brownsville, Mission, and Río Grande City."[10]

In addition to his academic responsibilities, Hinojosa worked all four years at the campus library as a tutor, and periodically as a translator. "It was a busy, happy time. As I tell my undergraduate students, 'If you can't have fun as an undergraduate, then you'll never have fun ...' All in all it was a typical undergraduate experience."[11]

In 1960, the chemical plant where he worked in Brownsville closed, and Hinojosa was unemployed. He returned to high school teaching, and taught English at Brownsville High School in 1959, 1960, and 1961. That year he took a federal entrance exam, passed it, and decided to work for the federal government, save money, and enroll in a graduate program. After working eighteen months, first in Houston, then in Corpus Christi, and finally in Brownsville for the Social Security Administration, he applied to several graduate schools, ultimately choosing New Mexico Highlands University. While working part-time, he attended two summer terms and two long terms there to receive a Master's degree in

English. By this time, Hinojosa was also seriously inquiring about doctoral programs. He selected the program at the University of Illinois for two reasons. "They had the best economic deal for me, and Luis Leal, great old man of Mexican and world literature, was there. I wanted to work with him, and I did. In fact, we even shared an office there."[12]

The opportunity to pursue academic work would be an opportunity that Hinojosa would extend to others. Engaged in doctoral studies as the Chicano Movement unfolded, he, along with fellow Chicano educators, went on to secure grants, scholarships, and teaching jobs for many young Mexican American men and women who otherwise might not have been able to obtain master's and doctoral degrees. He was pleased with the growing "cadre of educated Mexican Americans men and women," that "as a Valleyite, I got to know."[13] Recalling the sixties, Hinojosa notes that "it was a very exciting time, but every decade is an exciting time. It's just that things conjugated in the sixties."[14]

Receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois in 1969, Hinojosa taught as an assistant professor at Trinity University in San Antonio until 1970. A friend and former colleague from Trinity, Danny Rodriguez, introduced Hinojosa to the man who became his closest professional partner and friend, writer Tomás Rivera. They met at a conference, and Hinojosa recalls that "we didn't go to the conference that day. We walked for about four hours. We missed the luncheon and every lecture that day. All we did was talk about ourselves and about writing and how interested I was ... and the fact that I had not published a line up to then." [15]

Rivera encouraged Hinojosa to send him some of his writing, and their friendship as writers was born. Over the next fifteen years, the two lectured at "maybe twenty or thirty"[16] universities together, drawing attention to Chicano literature, as well as opening doors for other Mexican Americans to enter higher education. When Rivera died in 1984, Hinojosa received many letters of condolences

from friends and colleagues throughout the country "as if I'd lost a brother. Actually, I'd lost the dearest friend I'd ever had."[17]

Rivera's passing left Hinojosa to lead the growing number of voices in Chicano literature. In 1969, as the Chicano Movement was intensifying, Hinojosa had told himself, "I'll make my contribution as a writer."[18] It was a commitment that he has impressively fulfilled. Creating the fictional Belken County, in which the real protagonist is the people, Hinojosa captures the sense of place of the Rio Grande Valley, with its unique Mexican American character. In the essay *"Es el agua,"* he describes how that sense of place empowers its people with a connection to community, no matter where they may travel or what exhaustive labor, prejudice, or racism they may endure. In *"Con el pie en el estribo,"* the words of the elderly Mexican American lament the losses and recount the ironies brought to *"el Valle"* by Anglo-American influence and the passing of time. These are but two examples of the writing which has earned Hinojosa international recognition as the leading Chicano writer. In 1972, his novel *Estampas del Valle* earned the *Premio Quinto Sol*. Four years later, in 1976, Hinojosa won the prestigious *Casas de las Americas* award for *Klail City y sus alrededores*, the second novel in what he describes as the "Klail Trip Death Series." *Mi Querido Rafa* was awarded the Southwest Studies on Latin America award in 1981. Recent critically acclaimed works include *The Valley* (1983), *Partners in Crime* (1985), *Claros varones de Belken* (1986), and *Becky and Her Friends* (1996). All capture the uniqueness of the Rio Grande Valley and the universality of the experiences of its people. To date he has published fourteen novels.

Rolando Hinojosa lectures in Spain, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Cuba — wherever the request may be. As an Ellen Clayton Garwood Professor at The University of Texas, he has "the best job in the world. I teach where I want to be teaching and I teach what I like to teach."[19] In many ways, Hinojosa enjoys the best of two worlds: his status as professor in the classroom and his acclaim as a world-class writer. At seventy seven, the man from Belken County still retains a sense of belonging and sense of place

in both the Valley and the University of Texas at Austin, essentials which have guided both his work and his life.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Américo Paredes on September 22, 1994.

2 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Oscar Cisneros on May 20, 1996.

3 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

4 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

5 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

6 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

7 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

8 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

9 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

10 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

11 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

12 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

13 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

14 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

15 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

16 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

17 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

18 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

19 Interview by Manuel Medrano with Rolando Hinojosa on August 15, 1995.

A Brief Look at the Political Career of Ygnacio "Nacho" Garza

by

James W. Mills

Ygnacio "Nacho" Garza was born in Brownsville, Texas, on July 13, 1953. His father, the late Reynaldo Garza, had been appointed as a federal judge by President John F. Kennedy, a position he held for over forty years. Ygnacio's mother is Bertha Champion Garza. His paternal grandparents were Ygnacio and Zoila Garza, who moved to Brownsville from Matamoros, Mexico, in 1902. His maternal grandmother, Maria Gonzalez (Champion), was originally from northern Mexico, and his maternal grandfather, José Ángel, along with José's father, uncles and several cousins, were all Champions who had originally come from Italy in the 1840s. At that time their family name was Campione, but when they became American citizens, an American judge changed their name to Champion. The original Campione clan had arrived to America at Galveston Island and shortly thereafter made their way to Port Isabel, where they established themselves as successful members of the community.[1]

Ygnacio is currently a CPA, and he has been practicing Public Accounting in Brownsville for over thirty years. He won a seat on the Brownsville City Commission in 1979 at the age of twenty-six, and served until 1983. He had been back in Brownsville for four years after graduating from college. Mayor Ruben Edelstein and Barry Putegnat, Sr. approached Ygnacio about running for the City Commission, and Garza agreed and won. Edelstein, however, was not re-elected. Instead, Emilio A. Hernandez was elected mayor. As a result of the election, Ygnacio found himself on the Commission consisting of two former members (Ray Cardenas and Justo Barrientes) and three new ones (Mayor Hernandez, Bernice Brown, and Garza himself).

Ygnacio said that, when he ran for the city commission, the advice of his father was "just do it for one term. That way if someone tells you to do this or that for me or I won't vote for you next time, you can tell them where to go, because I'm not running anyway." So that is what Garza did, serving for only one term from 1979 to 1983. He noted that he truly enjoyed being a member of the city commission and that he learned a lot about Brownsville and how the city runs and operates.

Garza remembered once needing police escorts to the city commission meetings, because city officials had voted to raise the PUB utility rates. These rates had not been raised in some time, so when the rates were increased it was by a fairly significant amount. In spite of public opposition, city leaders thought it was important to make the system financially sound, and saw the rate increase as an investment. All the same, it was controversial to raise those utility rates. Garza saw this as an eye-opening experience as to how people got angry and reacted to the actions of City Hall. He noted that residents tend to hold off on tax increases until it becomes a crisis, and then local officials have to make a large increase (as opposed to gradually increasing rates) to meet obligations. The approval of tax increases is an example of the ominous task of city government. To complicate the issue, there were economic concerns in Brownsville at this time because of several peso devaluations and their consequences north of the border, as Brownsville has always had close ties to the Mexican economy.[2]

After his elected term as a Brownsville City Commissioner had expired, Ygnacio Garza left politics for about four years until he ran and won the election for mayor in November, 1987, serving in that capacity until December of 1991. Although the peso continued to devalue, the Brownsville economy expanded. Brownsville and its Port were growing. Ygnacio stated that the reason he ran for mayor was not based so much on economic concerns but rather as a result of low morale at city hall and a negative view of city politicians stemming from a Texas Ranger investigation in 1986 into the falsely alleged corruption of Mayor Hernandez and City

Commissioners Tony Zavaleta and Susan Austin. All of those arrested were eventually exonerated.

Ygnacio ran and won against his friend Ray Lopez, an active member of the community who had served as the president of the Chamber of Commerce as well as president of the Savings and Loan. Tony Zavaleta, Susan Austin, Harry McNair, and Tony Gonzalez served as City Commissioners with Nacho Garza. Because Brownsville City Commissioners are voted into office on staggered terms (a change that had been made to the city charter by former mayor Jim Mills in 1973), Ygnacio Garza also served with City Commissioners William Garza, Pete Benavides, and Butch Barbosa (affectionately referred to as the "three amigos") towards the end of his term. What ensued was a perceived split in the city government between the "three amigos," who were seen as representing the "community" and the so-called "twin towers" of Commissioner Tony Zavaleta and Mayor Garza, who represented the "establishment." The term "twin towers" was contrived from the fact that both men stand well in excess of six feet tall. One issue that divided these city officials was the fact the three new commissioners wanted to bring in "their" city manager, Steve Fitzgibbons, and fire the existing city manager, Kerry Sweatt. As a result, during an emergency closed-door session in July of 1988, the Brownsville City Commissioners accepted the resignation of Sweatt, and approved the appointment of Fitzgibbons.[3] There were other controversies as well.

City leaders also had to face several crises in a relatively short period of time. The La Tienda Amigo store collapse, hurricane Gilbert, and then the Central American refugee crisis were all issues that focused national attention on Brownsville. As the mayor, Nacho found himself being the spokesperson for the community. "This is an important role for a mayor, to be the public face for the community," said Garza. The national media had difficulty at times pronouncing "Ygnacio" correctly, and were surprised at how young the Brownsville mayor was. (Mayor Garza turned thirty-five in July of 1988). He appeared on "Good Morning America"

and other national television programs during these crises. Ygnacio Garza also noted that it is the mayor's role to dispatch professionals during these trying times and to give the "o.k."

Ironically, in June of 1988, Garza had recently returned from the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Salt Lake City, Utah, whose sessions covered such topics as "Dealing with Natural Disasters" including what to do if a building collapsed. One month later, Brownsville experienced such a disaster when a three-story department store building, *La Tienda Amigo*, located at the corner of 13th and East Elizabeth streets, collapsed on July 7, 1988, due to heavy rains. Fourteen people died instantly. Firefighters and rescue workers arrived on the scene, and, by using fiber optic cameras and ultra sound equipment, were able to locate forty-seven survivors, many of whom were airlifted to the University of Texas Medical Branch hospitals in Galveston. Every major newspaper and television station from Mexico to New York covered the story.[4] Andy Vega, the Police Chief of Brownsville at this time, asked if autopsies should be ordered, and Garza approved them. The Brownsville City Community Health Clinic expressed concern that it would lack sufficient facilities for survivors. Garza used "emergency powers" (real or perceived) to use an empty building across the street for a triage center. There, survivors of the collapse were given medical attention, and rescue workers were treated for heat exhaustion from working all day in Brownsville's July heat. The Brownsville community responded *en masse* to this disaster. On July 10, Mayor Garza addressed a crowd of two thousand at a memorial service held at the La Tienda Amigo site, and commended those in the community who had helped in the long, grueling rescue operations. [5]

Hurricane Gilbert threatened Brownsville a short time later. Beginning as a tropical depression off the Windward Islands in early September of 1988, Gilbert was listed as a category five hurricane a few days later. With the lowest barometric pressure ever recorded in the Western Hemisphere up to its time, hurricane Gilbert reached sustained winds of 185 miles per hour, and was

approaching on a direct course to hit Brownsville. Mayor Garza encouraged residents to seek designated city shelters or leave the area. Gilbert slammed into the northern Mexican coast on Friday, September 16, 1988, narrowly missing Brownsville. Garza toured the city the following day, and noted that, although there was light flooding, fallen trees, and damaged power lines, there were no fatalities.[6]

The Central American refugee crisis also occurred during Garza's term. People from Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador fled their homeland due to civil wars, seeking political asylum in the United States. They poured through Brownsville, Texas, at a rate of more than one thousand per week throughout 1988 and 1989. The Immigration and Naturalization Service, as well as the Border Patrol, said these people were to be restricted to the Harlingen district while they were being processed. Although many were truly refugees, some illegal aliens who were trying to slip though in the chaos were eventually flown back to their country of origin.[7] Tens of thousands of people were restricted to living in the Brownsville and Harlingen areas, responsibility for setting up temporary housing facilities for the refugees falling on these communities. Overwhelmed and under funded, Brownsville became the scene of makeshift campsites. Catholic nuns at Casa Oscar Romero on FM 313 (later renamed the Ozanam Center) provided temporary housing for a few hundred refugees, yet thousands more lived nearby in plastic and cardboard shantytowns. Portway Baptist Church helped as many as possible,[8] as did Christ the King Catholic Church and other churches.[9] The abandoned Amber hotel, next to the public library on Central Boulevard, was used to house other refugees, as were large vacant lots near the airport. Fear of possible crime or disease spread through the community.

Ygnacio Garza worked with mayors Bill Card of Harlingen and Gilbert Gonzalez of San Benito, as well as Cameron County Judge Tony Garza, in a joint effort to care for these thousands of Central American political refugees. Mayor Garza attended the U.S Conference of Mayors meeting in Washington, D.C., as did

Houston mayor Kathy Whitmore, Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley, and Miami mayor Xavier Suarez, facing similar problems. Garza stated that the federal government showed little concern over the refugee issues that southernmost Texas was dealing with. He spoke with the American Red Cross, which said that they dealt only with natural disasters. Meeting with the mayors of Harlingen and San Benito, as well as the County Judge, Garza and they decided that if the federal government did not take action, then Bill Card, an ex-marine colonel, would cite the Immigration and Processing Center, which had people living around it, as being in violation of Harlingen health and safety codes. Portable toilets, which had been set up for the refugees, quickly overflowed.[10] Since the federal government showed little concern over the refugee situation, the mayors, with Bill Card and Harlingen city enforcement officers in the lead, went to the Immigration Center and told them that they had fifteen minutes to leave, as they were in violation of health and safety codes. The Immigration officials were then escorted out, and the doors were padlocked by order of the city of Harlingen.[11] All of a sudden, officials in Washington were calling wanting to know what was going on. Even the United Nations got involved by sending down Susan Timberlake of the High Commission. Timberlake expressed concern over this international problem, but supported federal agencies in their insistence that all refugees had to be processed locally before leaving the Valley. However, by January of 1989, federal judge Filemon Vela issued an injunction against the Immigration and Naturalization Services which lifted their restraining order forcing those people to be here, and they began to leave the Valley. Most of those people did not want to be here, preferring to be with families in Houston, Los Angeles, or Miami, for example.

Thanks in part to the work of Cameron County Judge Tony Garza, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development eventually approved about $40,000 in funds to help. U.S. Representative Solomon Ortiz and Senator Phil Gramm also sought emergency funds.[12] Mayor Nacho Garza said it was

interesting because one never knows how people in politics will react to a situation like this. After the judge issued the order, a lot of people began getting on buses and leaving. Garza remembered getting a call from a Miami newspaper, and the reporter asked if it was true that the mayor of Brownsville was paying to send the refugees from Brownsville to Miami. Ygnacio Garza told the reporter that the rumor was not true. Nonetheless, the next day the Miami newspaper read, "Brownsville Mayor Paying for Immigrants to come to Miami!" [13]

During his term, Mayor Garza was also invited to attend the U.S. Conference of Mayors at the Kennedy School at Harvard. There, Garza met mayors from all over the country. He got involved by joining the Executive Conference Committee, and he found it interesting to see how Brownsville's issues compared to those of other mayors from different parts of the country. A mayor from California, for example, had a dilemma on how high bird feeders could be placed in backyards so as not to distract views. Garza noted that Brownsville issues were more along the lines of how to get people basic water and sewer services. He observed that a lot of the mayors really did not relate to the problems a border city has, to the general ebb and flow that goes on between two countries and cultures.

Garza felt that Brownsville has a weak mayoral form of government. The mayor has only one vote and no veto power because it is a city manager form of government. Garza remembered that, although he and some of the members of the city commission had their differences through the years, in the end they were able to put their animosities aside and bring the community together. They worked successfully on passing a bond issue for significant improvements such as the building of the new public library on Central Boulevard. Garza remarked that Betty Dodd was very instrumental in helping the new library project. In addition, they were able to build a new $20 million convention center and to improve the conditions of the streets and city parks. They also passed an economic development sales tax, which today funds

the Brownsville Economic Development Council and the Greater Brownsville Incentive Program, as well as public transportation. A new EMS system with modern EMS units and trained personnel were added, as were new fire trucks and police cars. "Brownsville transformed from an overgrown town to a modern city during the Garza administration" noted city commissioner Tony Zavaleta."[14] Mayor Garza added that he felt Brownsville leaders accomplished a lot. However, he also remembered that any little disagreement between government officials usually got all of the media attention.

In addition to passing a bond issue, Mayor Garza and city commissioners also worked with Texas Southmost College, and participated in promoting its partnership with the University of Texas. Mayor Garza and the city government also advanced the Los Tomates Bridge Project. Coordinating with County Judge Tony Garza, he was able to get most of the environmental concerns out of the way. He worked with the International Boundaries and Water Commission about relocating the levees. Much of the land that the College owns today is its property because Brownsville government leaders were able to convince the IBWC to relocate the levee. Where the new Business and Education building is now located used to be inside the levee. The levee was rebuilt as part of the Los Tomates project, and all of the reclaimed land was then purchased by the College. Mayor Garza also met with Dr. Juliet Garcia, President of the College, and Ruben Cardenas of McAllen, who was on the Texas Transportation Commission, about extending the Expressway over International Boulevard to reach the Los Tomates Bridge site. Mayor Garza, with many other people, played a part in this long-term project.

As mayor, Ygnacio Garza also worked with officials from the Port of Brownsville in regards to the Rail Relocation Project. Garza went to Washington, D.C., with Port Commissioners Joe Coulter and Bill Reed and with consultant Raul Besteiro to visit Senator Benson. Shortly thereafter, this long-term project was begun. To help facilitate the rail relocation, a new overpass was built over highway 511 near the Port, to let the trains go underneath it.

Mayor Garza further noted that he found it enjoyable working on such community projects.

The Mayor of Matamoros opposite Nacho Garza was first Jorge Cardenas and then Fernando Montemayor. Garza felt that the relationship was good between the two cities. The mayors of both cities worked together on the Los Tomates bridge issue, and there was a lot of camaraderie expressed during Charro Days. The first event of this celebration was when the two mayors would meet at the bridge and then go together, first to some of the events in Matamoros, and then to some in Brownsville. The mayors of Brownsville and of Matamoros would ride in a car together in Saturday's big parade, which began in Brownsville and ended at City Hall in Matamoros. Garza remembers that one time they brought part of the University of Texas marching band down from Austin to lead the parade. Mayor Garza and Matamoros Mayor Montemayor were riding together in the car behind the band, which wore orange and white uniforms with the Texas longhorn symbol on their backs. Mayor Montemayor asked if that was the city's band Garza said, "No, they are more like the state band of Texas!"

Garza felt that he and other Brownsville leaders had good relations, not only with the leaders of Matamoros, but also with leading *políticos* from Mexico City. Garza also felt that he was fortunate in having a good relationship with Texas Governor Ann Richards, whom he joined on some trips to Mexico City to engage in talks about NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Association). They met with the President of Mexico and other Mexican high officials. Through Ann Richards and Senator Benson, Garza was appointed to the Border Cooperation Commission, a byproduct of NAFTA, in which capacity he served for ten years. It was a ten-member commission, five from Mexico and five from the U.S., including the director of the Environmental Protection Agency, or a representative, an International Boundary and Water Commission official, a state representative, a city representative, and an at large representative. There were the equivalents from

Mexico. Together they reviewed processes and developed projects. Ann Richards also appointed Garza to serve on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. Garza says his ability to serve on those commissions stemmed from his having been the mayor and from his subsequent relationships with Senator Benson and Governor Richards. Garza noted that he was the first mayor in Texas to endorse Ann Richard's candidacy for Texas governor, and he felt he had made a good choice. He remembered that one time, when she was the state treasurer, she came to Brownsville out of interest in the local *colonias*, and expressed her concerns as to how Texas could help these areas. Together, they walked through Cameron Park, and were joined by members of the Valley Interfaith. Garza feels he had a close friendship with Governor Richards.

Ygnacio Garza felt the role of mayor was rewarding. He noted that the job was challenging at times, but commented that it was great meeting so many people. He especially remembered one emotional moment, when National Guard units coming back from Desert Storm arrived at the National Guard Amory, greeted by mariachis. Inside the armory, brothers, sisters, children, and other family members greeted them singing, "I'm proud to be an American!" That is the sort of positive spirit he found while in office on the border.[15]

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1 Interview by James W. Mills with Ygnacio Garza on 19 Oct. 2005.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *The Brownsville Herald*. 6 July 1988, 1A.

4 *The Brownsville Herald*. 8 July 1988, 1A.

5 *The Brownsville Herald*. 11 July 1988, 1A.

6 *The Brownsville Herald*. 17 Sept. 1988, 1A.

7 *The Houston Chronicle*. 13 Jan. 1989, 28A.

8 Interview by James W. Mills with Milo Kearney on 1 March 2006.

9 *The Brownsville Herald*. 10 Jan. 1989, 8A.

10 *The El Paso Times*. 13 Jan. 1989, 1B.

11 Interview by James W. Mills with Ygnacio Garza on 19 Oct. 2005.

12 *The Valley Morning Star*. 7 Jan. 1989, 3B.

13 Interview by James W. Mills with Ygnacio Garza on 19 Oct. 2005.

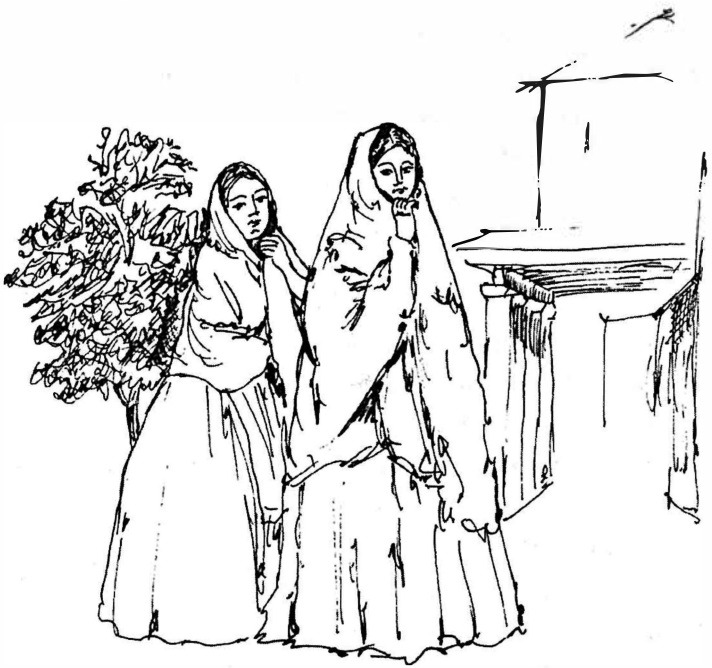
14 Interview by James Mills with Antonio Zavaleta on 16 Feb. 2006.

15 Interview by James W. Mills with Ygnacio Garza on 19 Oct. 2005.

SOCIAL HISTORY

The Lady and her Daughter in White

Folktale heard by Peter Gawenda



In the area of West Levee Street, St. Charles, and Seventh and Sixth Streets, usually after dark, two ladies in white are seen wandering either on the sidewalks or across the lawns. Sometimes they stop at the corner of Levee and Seventh at an iron pole with a horse-head, an old post to which horses were tied during horse and buggy days. The pole was still there in the late 1980s. The two are said to be friendly. They stop and stare, but, when approached, they disappear. Some people have described them as two girls, but there are witnesses who insist that they look like mother and daughter and that they have dark skin and beautiful green eyes. Several people have referred to them as mulattos. In summertime, they show more of their dark skin because they wear short sleeves and low-cut blouses. Some people insist that they have seen two different sets of spirits, mother and daughter and two younger girls, probably sisters.

The mother and daughter sometimes stop and stare at people, waiting to be approached. A Canadian couple, Winter Texans, thought that the two women lived in the street, and tried to ask them for directions. But the two just smiled and floated away towards one of the homes that stood empty at that time. Several years later, when the two Canadians were visiting again, they said that they had encountered the two dark skinned ladies again, and they had not aged at all. As the two again had disappeared into the same house, the couple came next morning to the house trying to tell the owners their experience. But the owners were not at home, only relatives who were visiting.

In the eighties, a visitor from Mexico came to the house and inquired about the former owner of the house, whether they or the current owners had had any out-of-the-ordinary experiences. The owner invited the lady into the house and asked her to sit down. The visitor was very hesitant and was constantly looking around. But, after she was served a cup of coffee, she seemed to relax and admitted that her grandfather, a doctor, had once lived in this house. In the thirties, when he was almost eighty years old, he often referred to the house and wanted to come back to just visit one more time. But that was almost fifty years before, and so she wanted to visit her grandfather's house and Brownsville. She told us what she had been told by her grandfather.

They called Brownsville a "one-horse-town." The area of St. Charles and West Levee had not even been developed. The streets close to the Fort had become a business and bar district when in 1853 an epidemic of yellow fever killed almost sixty troopers in the fort. In fact the grandfather believed that Brownsville had not even accepted the name of Brownsville yet. All that existed was an assembly of houses on this side of the Rio Grande that seemed to be an extension of Matamoros. In that year, the grandfather and what he called his first family arrived. He always said that he was a medical doctor from the East Coast who had met his companion and her daughter while traveling through Louisiana. Her clothing was the latest French style, and when he took her into town, many

men seemed to turn around to get a second look, and that made him very jealous. As there was no hotel available on this side of the river, her grandfather (who also claimed to be a pharmacist) rented a small apartment or a hotel room in Matamoros. Supposedly, his medicine was very profitable, because he sold it as cure for yellow fever, dysentery, and many other ailments. The lady said that her grandfather always said that, due to the high alcohol content, the medicine made patients feel good. But then, he must have also been a good salesman.

Sometime later, he had acquired land and had built his own house where he manufactured his medicines and cure-alls. By that time, he started to take trips without his companion and her daughter. The lady was not sure what happened next, because her father would always get watery eyes when he continued. He just mentioned that they were gone. Returning one day from Mexico, he announced in the town's cantinas that he was a free man again as his wife and daughter had left him. He only roamed through his house all night and started to bury his medicine bottles in his backyard. He no longer practiced, but would sleep all day and not permit anyone into his house. He said something about the house catching fire. He supposedly closed the old chimney and built a second one on the other side of the house. He remarried soon afterwards. But that marriage supposedly did not last either. According to the grandfather, the second wife and her sister, who was visiting, packed their belongings into a buggy and left. Finally, he sold his house and disappeared into Mexico where he married a third time. But he was very odd, often talking to himself, and spending a lot of time in church.

The house was owned by different people afterwards, but usually not for long, and sometimes only some parts of the house would be occupied. The owners who had invited the lady from Mexico inside later confirmed that the strange happenings occurred in the house. They also found many medicine bottles when they turned the ground in the backyard or when planting trees.

Living with Brownsville's Resacas

by

Mimosa Stephenson

Resacas, or oxbow lakes, remnants the shifting Rio Grande has left behind due to storm and flood, contribute to Brownsville's character, adding beauty, benefiting the economy, and encouraging recreation. In *Stories Brownsville Told Its Children*, Milo Kearney tells how the curious Big, Brave River couldn't resist the temptation repeatedly to wander to the territory farther south, but how it left resacas behind for the people living beside its old locations, thereby still supplying them with water for drinking, fishing, swimming, and looking at their pretty reflections.[1] As Ben Reyna[2] notes, resacas surround all the suburbs and neighborhoods in Brownsville. Most are natural leftovers of a fickle river though a few, such as the lake in Cowan Terrace, the one crossing Barnard Road dug by Alton Gloor forty or fifty years ago, and the new one in Bill Hudson's subdivision to the north, show the premium placed on resacas by Brownsville residents. Indeed, one glance at a map of the city shows water, water everywhere. Nature has silted in parts of the resacas, and residents have filled in other parts, especially in damming up resacas for passage instead of building bridges as has been done at Morningside Road. Because some of these bits of the old riverbed no longer seem connected to anything, some have gained currency as lakes, such as Ebony Lake near Valley Baptist Hospital at Jefferson and Central Boulevard and Acacia Lake, where Margaret Clark used to teach swimming. This natural resource, making life better in Brownsville, Texas, deserves and requires our care.

William A. Adams explains the origin of these resacas:

> In the past, the great looping meanders of the river, characteristic of any water flowing over a nearly

> ... flat surface, would occasionally become cut off during periods of flood. The engorged, racing river, like a speeding car failing to make a bend, would fail to turn into a meander and, instead, burst through its bank and foreshorten the channel. The cut off meander would then dry up or, if rainfall and ground seepage were sufficient, remain as an ox-bow lake.[3]

The word *resaca* apparently applies only to abandoned river channels in deep South Texas. Yolanda Gonzalez relates the word to the Spanish *esteros*, as they were called in travelogues of a couple centuries ago. A translation of Jean Louis Berlandier's *Journey to Mexico* says *esteros* means *swamps*.[4] José Raúl Canseco Botello refers to a village called "San Juan de los Esteros Hermosos" (present-day Matamoros) established in 1774, noting that when missionaries arrived they wanted to change the name to "Congregación de Nuestra Señora del Refugio de los Esteros."[5] *The Handbook of Texas* says of *resaca*, "The Spanish name means flowing."[6] In *Lost Bends of the Rio Grande: Brownsville's Oxbow Lakes*, Norman Richard, Ricardo Leal, and Genaro Daniel Lopez say the word means "to take back" as the river raging during a major storm or flood sometimes cuts itself a new channel in this flat delta land, taking back and giving up its bed as it wanders through the centuries. In their film, Richard, Leal, and Lopez show how these resacas naturally change their banks as the prevailing flow of the water cuts the outer bank and deposits sediment on the inner bank or pointbar.[7] Larry Löf distinguishes between *bancos*, loops in the river that are cut off, and *resacas*, old river channels, saying the Ft. Brown Resaca is really a banco. An 1893 book on Brownsville and Matamoros compiled by Lieut. W. H. Chatfield refers to the Ft. Brown Resaca of that time:

An elliptical sheet of water, called the "Lagoon," lies in the center of the reservation. It is confined in an old channel of the Rio Grande, gates being provided at either end communicating with the river, by means of which the water is changed at each "rise," and maintained

at the highest practicable stage, for sanitary reasons. Surrounded by this lagoon and the river is an island of twenty-five acres, which, previous to 1846, was covered with timber; but the trees were felled at that time to prevent the surprise of Fort Taylor.[8]

According to Joe Hinojosa, of the city's Ecological Department, whose job puts him in charge of the resacas, there are three systems. The Town Resaca, which wanders behind Jacaranda Street and through the zoo and the old part of the city, experiences the most urban pressure and the greatest sediment load. Billy Faulk told me that his father once owned resaca-frontage land where Old Alice Road meets Boca Chica; that site has been filled in with dirt to make room for First Baptist Church. The Resaca de la Guerra (also called the Resaca de la Palma), bigger and longer than the Town Resaca, meanders around subdivisions of the last century from Old Spanish Trail, through Valley Inn and Country Club, around Palo Verde, Creekbend, and Cowan Terrace, along between Billy Mitchell and Southmost Road until it skirts the south and east sides of the airport. It is less urbanized and has more green cover on its banks than the Town Resaca. *The Handbook of Texas* says the "Resaca Guerra rises in southern Cameron County and flows southeast about twelve miles to the Rio Grande. The stream takes its name from its having been the site of the battle of Resaca de la Palma."[9] The Resaca del Rancho Viejo to the north circles around the Alton Gloor subdivision, Cameron Park, and Rio del Sol before crossing Padre Island Boulevard, Coffeeport, Vermillion, and Indiana to the east. With less development on the outskirts of the city, it is surrounded by more greenery.

The resacas are maintained by pumping water from the Rio Grande River into them. Joe Hinojosa says that irrigation districts have pumped water into the resacas since 1906, using these natural channels to transport water to farmers. Involved in caring for the resacas are the City of Brownsville, Public Utilities Board (in 1995 the city built a pipeline across the city, but before then "raw water" was transported in the resacas), Brownsville Irrigation District, and Cameron County Irrigation District #5.

Cameron County Drainage District provides water to the Paseo de la Resaca Subdivision, which has man-made resacas. The city has rights to the Fort Brown Resaca, but most property owners have title to the land on either side of the resaca to the middle. It is understood that they can use water from the resacas to water their lawns in return for letting the city use the resacas for conveying and storing raw water for domestic uses. The resacas are also part of the storm water system. Matamoros filled in its resacas to make more useable land and has major problems of flooding as a result. The viable resacas in Brownsville keep down the flooding.

Flooding does occur in the area though. Elsa Davis says her parents came to Brownsville in 1936-37. In 1938 before dams and a federal levee, the river around the golf course at Ft. Brown flooded and cut off a piece of land from Mexico that then became U.S. property. Her father, Ralph Killingstad, a Norwegian businessman and engineer, bought Banco Lozano (so-called because it belonged to the Lozano family) though people told him he was a fool for buying land that was under water; he soon had the water off the land. Many years later her mother built a house on the property. The city eventually obtained the house and let it deteriorate. Now the house is gone, but palm trees that Elsa planted on the property fifty-five years ago are still growing near the new Business-Education Complex beside the resaca on the University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College campus.

Paul Kavanaugh, who lives in a condominium close to the corner of Owens Road and Boca Chica on a little bay off of Acacia Lake, found out about Brownsville flooding the hard way. Of course, over the years the resacas have been filling up with silt and can no longer hold as much water as they used to. On the east side of Owens Road the resaca is much deeper than on the west side where he lives. The prevailing wind has pushed the water and the silt to the west. In October 1996, after a big rain, the five apartments closest to the resaca, five or six houses on Estero Street, and seven or eight houses on Resaca Street flooded. Drainage comes into the Resaca, and garbage such as old mattresses had

been allowed to accumulate. Also the pumps that should have emptied floodwater from that end of the resaca were not working. No one seemed to know whether the city or the irrigation district had responsibility, and nobody pumped. The apartment closest to the resaca among Paul's neighbors had water four feet deep. In Paul's apartment it was only one foot deep, but when drywall, doors, linoleum, cabinets, refrigerator, stove, and hot water heater had to be replaced, the damage came to $10,000. After that, the city and the irrigation district began to talk to one another, and the city has taken responsibility for that end of the resaca. Since then, the drainage ditches have been maintained, and new pumps have been bought. Now the situation is better, but dredging is still needed west of Owens Road. The situation is complicated by the city's need to gain permission from the Environmental Protection Agency before it can pump water into the river because the resaca water is so polluted. Paul says the flood was not an insurmountable problem for his family because they could move to the second floor and put their furniture on blocks. Then the insurance company paid for the remodeling. Even though Brownsville is nearly flat, most of the city does not flood in that manner, largely because the resacas provide a place for excess rainwater to drain.

Joe Hinojosa says another aesthetic and economic value of the resacas is that they make property values higher and thus raise the tax revenue of the city. Because resaca property is considered more beautiful, it sells for more and brings in more tax money. The city must keep water in the resacas all year round if they are to continue to hold water and maintain property values. If the resacas were ever allowed to dry up, the clay liners would dry, crack, and lose their capacity for storage; the beautiful resource would be gone and irrecoverable.

Because of their beauty, residents have chosen to build fine homes on the resacas. Katy Cowan told me of her father-in-law, James Cowan, Sr., who came to Brownsville working with the W. E. Stewart Land Company (of Weslaco fame) as a real estate man, bringing land parties to the Rio Grande Valley. He chose the inside

of a horseshoe bend in the Resaca de la Guerra for his first small home. On that spot in 1922 he built a $40,000 showplace with parquet floors, chandeliers, and four bedrooms with bathrooms. Between each two bedrooms was a hall leading to an outdoor pagoda. He first planted his peninsula in citrus, but bad freezes in the late twenties and early thirties killed the trees, so he converted the peninsula into pasture land for a registered jersey herd. He raised alfalfa for the cattle, alfalfa that has reseeded itself for at least forty years as the one vacant lot left in the subdivision where his house and dairy were still grows enough fragrant alfalfa to scent the air.

Another house built on the resaca was listed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of the "11 Most Endangered Places of 2004" because "This little-known 1937 house designed by famed architect Richard Neutra has stood vacant for several years and is gradually being destroyed by weather, neglect and vandalism."[10] The modernist architect Richard Neutra designed the house for George Kraigher, a Pan American Airways pilot. Under an agreement between the city and the university, Larry Löf is now restoring this house, one of two Neutra designed in Texas.[11] The house is on the resaca that crosses Paredes Line Road between Boca Chica Boulevard and Price Road.

As one-time courses of the river and as existing lakes, the resacas have historical significance. Movement of the Rio Grande has shifted the U. S. boundary with Mexico, as Elsa Davis's story above demonstrates. In "Resacas and Bancos in Brownsville History," Antonio N. Zavaleta traces this boundary movement as evidenced by remnants of old river beds and discusses artifacts of native peoples unearthed by archaeologists in these sites. The area has been inhabited for four or five thousand years because of the available water.[12] According to Ruby A. Wooldridge and Robert B. Vezzetti, regarding the Battle of Resaca de la Palma fought on May 9, 1846, the retreating General Mariano Arista withdrew to that spot because "the resaca bank and thick brush formed an ideal point for defensive action."[13] Adolf Dittman says

that when his father built their house in 1917, instead of building a bridge across the road to get to the house, he dumped dirt into the resaca to make a dam to drive across at what is now 13th Street. At the time there were foxholes dug into the banks by U. S. soldiers to provide cover as they protected citizens against the forages of Pancho Villa onto U. S. territory. Adolf's parents had to go to Fort Brown because their home was too dangerous.

Some of the resacas have or had islands in them, but several have disappeared. K.K. Walker says that her mother, Margaret Clark, used to teach swimming from an island at Acacia Lake. Elsa Davis says her father bought about three acres with beautiful trees next to Mercy Hospital (where the medical clinic now sits beside Valley Baptist Hospital). Her father built a big stone barbecue pit on an island in the middle of the resaca there. With erosion and the resaca silting in, the island eventually diappeared, but for years the chimney of the barbecue pit could be seen sticking out of the water. Bill Davis says of the island in the resaca near McLelland Boulevard that he and his friends used to throw boards across to make a bridge. Imitating Huckleberry Finn, one night Jimmy Odabashian, Eric Bower, Ricky Fitzpatrick, and Bill made a campfire and camped out on the island. After it grew late, they walked over to talk to some girls and went to find some food on Central Boulevard, where a policemen saw them. Bill's friends ran to hide, but the policeman threw Bill against his car, asking why he was out so late and if he had papers for his bicycle. Bill says he and Jimmy were taken home by a friendly, understanding policeman, and they didn't get into much trouble with their parents, but Eric got a whipping from his father because the policeman made him look guilty.

Another natural phenomenon concerning the resacas is the weather, which in a hot dry summer causes the resacas to turn into pastureland. Brownsville usually has a temperate climate though it can become torrid in the summer and freezing in the winter. Besides it is prone to hurricanes. Adolf Dittman says that in 1951 when he was in college the resaca froze over. He had also seen

it freeze over in the late thirties or early forties. When the ducks came in for a landing and slid into the open patches of water (it was not frozen solid all over), they acted as if the ice was strange to them, but they came from the North. The water in the resacas froze again in 1983 and 1989.

Resaca banks are covered with native vegetation. Of course there is a great deal of mesquite, but retama and huisache grow there also. Richard, Leal, and Lopez point to Montezuma bald cypress along the resaca banks. Genaro Lopez says there used to be a lot more vegetation on the banks than there is now that many have retaining walls. Joe Hinojosa points out that the two biggest vegetation problems are water hyacinths and hydrilla. Hydrilla is a submerged growth that creates a natural dam and slows down river flow. The city has worked at removing these plants mechanically but has only been able to treat patches as there is so much vegetation. The areas that are left are low on oxygen because of decay. One long-term solution the state has introduced is a water lettuce weevil that is a natural predator of water hyacinths. These plants are exotics brought in perhaps in aquariums that were then emptied into the resacas, and they have no natural predators here. They could have been ballast from boats or could have been clinging to boat trailers that had been in another lake earlier. Some people think they look pretty, but they clog the resacas. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has been successful in handling the problem, and the city and irrigation districts have followed their lead, but Mother Nature provides the most relief: cold weather kills the tropical plants, hurricanes blow them out, and a good rain flushes them out.

The resacas and their plant-covered banks provide habitat for innumerable birds, creating a bird-watcher's paradise. Ducks and geese live here permanently. A gander with clipped wings named Gladstone lives on the lake in Cowan Terrace with his two mates. They and a mixture of mallards, white puddleducks, and mergansers come flying, swimming, and waddling up when we go to the resaca with our grandchildren to feed them stale bread.

In addition, Richard, Leal, and Lopez identify black-bellied whistling ducks, double crested cormorants, green kingfishers, mud daubers, domesticated Peking ducks, Muscovy ducks, and moorhens. Yolanda Gonzalez says she sees blue herons and red-headed green parrots (which pass every morning and evening). One day she saw about two hundred little white storks. Birders Teresa and Bob Gibson have seen many additional birds on the resaca: pied bill grebe, least grebe, American white pelican, anhinga, olivaceous cormorant, black-crowned night heron, green-backed heron, cattle egret, snowy egret, mottled duck, green-winged teal, northern shoveler, blue winged teal, black-bellied whistling duck, ring-necked duck, sora, purple gallinule, American coot, black-necked stilt, killdeer, black shouldered kite, laughing gull, ring-billed gull, herring gull, least tern, royal tern, Caspian tern, sandwich tern, harris hawk, osprey, cooper's hawk, northern harrier, American kestrel, turkey vulture, black vulture, white-winged dove, ringed-necked turtle dove, common ground-dove, Inca dove, white-tipped dove, green parrot, red-crowned parrot, yellow-headed parrot, groove-billed ani, greater roadrunner, great horned owl, eastern screech-owl, common paruraque, common nighthawk, buff-bellied hummingbird, ruby-throated hummingbird, black-chinned, hummingbird, ringed kingfisher, belted kingfisher, golden-fronted woodpecker, eastern kingbird, western kingbird, Couch's kingbird, scissor-tail flycatcher, great kiskadee , ash-throated flycatcher, vermillion flycatcher, purple martin, tree swallow, green jay, chachalaca, Mexican crow, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren, kinglet, American robin, northern mockingbird, long-billed thrasher, curve-billed thrasher, cedar waxwing, orange-crowned warbler, yellow-rumped warbler, yellow-throated warbler, common yellowthroat, northern cardinal, pyrrhuloxia, red-winged blackbird, great-tailed grackle, Altamira oriole, hooded oriole, Bullock's oriole, scarlet tanager, American goldfinch, lesser goldfinch, and house sparrow.

Of course, the resacas are home to fish. Larry Löf says the carp in the resacas are goldfish that have been set loose. He used to find

frogs, turtles, little glassy shrimp (which he caught with a net and cloth), sunfish, and catfish. Marshall Younkman identifies gar, bass, gaspergou, mullet, soft shell turtles and hard shell turtles. As biologists, Richard, Leal, and Lopez give specific names to the animal life in the resacas. They point to three types of gar or catan: spotted gar, alligator gar, and long-nosed gar. They also note channel catfish, sail-fin mollies, Rio Grande pickering, cichlid, Texas spiny soft-shelled turtles (which burrow into the mud in drought), and red-eared turtles. They identify black spotted newts, a threatened species, and Rio Grande sirens, two-legged entirely aquatic salamanders. Genaro Lopez says the college tried to set up a fish hatchery, and some of the tilapia from Africa escaped into the resaca. Fish need shallow, clean water for the eggs to hatch, and now the resacas are dirty with oil from street runoff, which has poisoned the water.

Lopez remembers that when he was growing up, the resacas were a wildlife sanctuary as the animals hid in the brush along the banks. Bob and Teresa Gibson saw a diamond-back watersnake once, and they often saw indigo snakes. Marty Heaner says that when he built Lakeway, he dredged the Resaca, and found a beaver dam there. Larry Löf notes that alligators are returning; late at night the police see them crossing the resacas. Nutria used to be numerous and troublesome as they tunnel under banks like beaver, causing them to crumble, and they kill small cats and dogs. Now their numbers have dwindled because many resacas have bulkheads the nutria can't burrow through.[14]

The uses of resacas are as varied as tourism, mosquito control, and criminal justice. According to Yolanda Gonzalez, during Charro Days one year, boats were decorated like floats in a parade as in Xochimilco. Michael Puckett says in 1949 there was a miniature replica of the floating gardens on the Ft. Brown Resaca. The Lincoln Park Resaca had such floats another year. Joe Hinojosa says people worry that the resacas will breed mosquitos, but it is puddles in almost dry resacas without predators that create problems. When the resacas dry up, the fish are killed, algae build

up, and the mosquito population grows. With water in the resacas, the fish and tadpoles eat the mosquito larvae, and the natural movement of the water keeps the mosquito larvae from thriving. The mosquito population grows from standing water in old tires in people's backyards.

Ben Reyna has resaca and police stories. When he entered the Police Cadet Program masterminded by Ruben Garcia at T.S.C., he was taught water safety because of the waterways. The Police Department worried that thieves would come in the back way from the resaca to rob people. Once jet skis were forfeited to the police and given to the Fire Department to aid in swift rescue. In two incidents, people died in cars. A woman crossing the resaca on Barnard was caught when the water rose over the low bridge. As the current pushed her car off the bridge into the deeper water, neighbors tried to get her to open the door, but she was afraid and refused. Her car drifted into the deep water, and she drowned. In another incident around 1978, a woman with two children in the car had the accelerator pedal stick. The car was thrown into the resaca after hitting a palm tree, and she and the children were killed. The policeman who went into the resaca to rescue them took off his boots and clothes first, only to find them stolen when he climbed out. Ben also tells of returning to his truck near Sunrise Mall at F.M. 802 to find a man had broken in. Ben was off duty but had his pistol and radio. The man plunged into the Resaca, and swam across, but Ben followed, walking chest deep and holding up the gun and $1,800 radio. As he had called the Police Department and given his location and situation, Ruben Garcia arrested the man as he climbed out on the other side.

Margaret Clark used the resacas to teach swimming from 1928 until the early fifties, missing only a year and a half in 1944-45 while she was in Brazil with her husband, who had been sent there by Pan American Airlines to fix planes during World War II. Ida Laura Burns, her sister, says their family moved to Brownsville in 1916. At the time, the resaca was open and flowing every time the river rose or Brownsville got a good rain. Their grandmother

taught the two girls to swim near Valley Inn and Country Club when Margaret was six and Ida Laura was four. Because their grandmother didn't want to be seen in her long bathing suit that reached her knees, she took the children out at daybreak. She held one child with each arm and commanded, "Kick and paddle; kick and paddle." Every morning Judge J. C. George came by in his car to go swimming. After the girls learned to swim, he took them with him to the V.I.C.C. pool (a fenced area in the resaca) to swim. He required them each to swim a lap with him and then let them play while he did laps.

According to Ida Laura, Margaret started teaching swimming at Martin's Swimming Pool back of Marshall Younkman's place on Lazy Acres. At the time she started, she was a freshman in college majoring in Physical Education at the College of Industrial Arts in Denton (now Texas Women's University). Her first summer, she taught four or five adults who came about 5:30 a.m to learn to swim. Margaret Clark's daughter, Kathleen Kyle "K. K." Clark Walker, told me about the preparations and facilities at Acacia Lake. After Margaret Monroe married Kenneth Clark, they bought property on the resaca at 84 Billy Mitchell. Every spring, the whole family got a typhoid shot in preparation for the summer in the resaca. Along in the late spring, K.K.'s father took them to the beach to get truckloads of sand to pour where Mrs. Clark would have her swimming program to cover the mud. Kenneth built a dock on the bank and another in the middle of the resaca with a diving board and a shallow pool for the children first learning. He also fixed a diving board and slide on the shore, a kick rail for practicing, a roped-off area for less experienced swimmers, two dressing tents for changing, and later a bathhouse. In the late forties and early fifties a little island, now gone, provided a good place for swimming lessons. The resaca was much deeper then, and the flow of the water kept the waterweeds out.

Several people helped Mrs. Clark teach swimming. K. K. says Jane Hawkins taught her to swim. Another long-time instructor was Hector Garcia, who says he started lifeguarding for Mrs.

Clark when he came home from school in the summer of 1944. In 1946-47, he was selected to go to Atlanta for canoeing, rescuing, and lifeguarding training. He worked from noon to six or seven in the evening. Ten to forty people came to swim each afternoon as the only other pool was at V.I.C.C. Mrs. Clark had a soda-pop machine and charged 50 cents to use the swimming pool. Many children stayed all afternoon. Hector remembers that successful students needed to swim to the wooden bridge at Acacia Lake Drive to prove they were good swimmers. He rowed a boat down to the bridge to pick up the tired swimmers and bring them back after they had succeeded in their swim. He taught his cousin Reynaldo Garcia to be a lifeguard and swimming instructor, and Rey took over when Hector went to college. Hector says he also put out bases for softball, and the children used homemade dumbbells and barbells to build muscle. Olive Rathjen remembers that she had to swim over the resaca and back to prove she was "done." The children passed quickly from tadpole to frog to fish to swan as they were eager to get their feet out of the squishy mud.

K.K. Walker says her mother rented a bus to pick up children, but several other people remember more about that bus. Olive Rathjen says Mrs. Clark had a camioneta, an open bus with a canopy on the top and railings along the side. She and other children stood on the corner in their bathing suits and caps waiting for the bus. Joe Colunga says one of his father's buses went around picking up children. Among those learning to swim from Mrs. Clark were Marty Heaner, Katy Cowan's children, Chula Griffin, Adolf Dittman, Karen Winans, and Bill Davis. Bill says Mrs. Clark was very strict, and the children listened to what she said, but she was also patient. Many people told me that everybody learned to swim from Margaret Clark, and I believed them because my children learned to swim from her in the eighties. Cipriano Cardenas helped me see the real situation when he said that he learned to swim at Sam's Pool in Ringgold Park (now Dean Porter Park) when he was twelve or thirteen from the Police Department, which offered

swimming classes free or near free. He says, "The rich kids went to Margaret Clark."

Another major resaca user is the Gladys Porter Zoo, built on the Town Resaca. According to Jaime Peña, Conservation Biologist at the zoo, Gladys Porter chose the resaca site because she wanted the animals in a natural and realistic habitat. Natural freeloaders—egrets, pelicans, seagulls, pigeons, and grackles—mingle with American and Chilean flamingos, mute swans, Cygnus swans, black swans and crowned cranes. Another advantage of the resaca site is that the monkeys and the lemurs are afraid of the water so they can be kept in quite natural surroundings. There is a danger though as one time a lion fell into the resaca and drowned.

Brownsville's resacas add beauty, but are seldom now enjoyed as they once were. Tales of boyhood on the resacas of Brownsville rival those of Mark Twain on the Mississippi. Adolf Dittman has wonderful stories to tell of growing up on Ebony Lake. Most of the time the resaca was shallow, seldom over waist deep, though after a big rain it might deepen to six feet. He was the only boy who waded to school and often had mud up his legs. But his enjoyment of the resaca began much earlier: his aunt claimed that when he was still in diapers, she found him playing in the mud. When he was a little older, his house was a gathering place for neighborhood children, who began arriving early in the morning and hollered for company, so he didn't need an alarm clock. They hung out, swimming, fishing, canoeing, sailing, and swinging out over the water on ropes.

Swimming has been a favorite pastime in the resacas. Rosie Harrison, who lives in Rio del Sol on the Resaca del Rancho Viejo, says the children in her neighborhood go swimming there as the current moves swiftly in the deep and wide resaca, making the water cleaner than in the more populated areas the resaca runs through. Her children swim in the resaca with their friends and float with inner tubes. The one rule is that they can't go directly from the resaca into their pool because they might be transporting

algae from the resaca. Ida Laura Burns also says the children living on Lazy Acres still swim in the resaca, but for most Brownsville residents swimming in the resaca is a memory. Mike Gonzalez says that V.I.C.C. was the first country club in South Texas, and it roped off an area of resaca. This would have been in the late teens and early twenties. Marshall Younkman remembers swimming and wading in the resaca every day when he was a child. The residents even had a diving board at what they called Martin's Swimming Pool, a part of Acacia Lake. Elsa Davis says when her parents first moved to Brownsville in the late thirties, they rented a house on Fruitdale near McKenzie and the port road from the C. C. Wentz's. She and their grandson Ted Ferenbach[15] went to school together and swam together.

Genaro Lopez says as a boy he swam in the resaca where the zoo is now located, and sometimes the boys got cut with broken glass. One man I talked with (who didn't want to be identified in connection with this story) said he lived way down on Southmost Road as a boy. He and his friends swam in the resaca, built tree houses beside it, had ropes to swing out and drop from into the water, and even went skinny dipping on occasion. His first year out of college, he and a group of friends went back to their favorite swimming hole, stripped, and went in for a dip. A lady with a gun arrived and told them to get out as they were trespassing. They got out.

Katy Cowan says her husband James Cowan, Jr., her brother Ernest Hacker, and their friends had a tire on a pole, from which they could swing way out almost across the resaca in what is now Cowan Terrace. There were so many children swimming that they pushed the silt away and had a clay bottom. After she married and lived there, her children also swam in the resaca until they moved to Florida in 1959. When the Cowan Subdivision was put into the middle of the horseshoe-shaped bend of the Resaca de la Guerra in the sixties, the developers dug a lake and connected it to the resaca with a channel so more people would have water frontage. Mary Winans and her husband built a house in that subdivision on Cowan Terrace East in 1966. Agnes Browne, Mary's sister,

and Gretchen Nash, her daughter, told me about using the resaca. Gretchen says at the time it was pretty much a wilderness with coyotes in a mist in the morning. She says the Adams family down the street even got rabies from the coyotes. Gretchen, Karen, and Stephen Winans had a boat and a float and went waterskiing. They swam often, but became afraid of the snakes though not of the gars. Their dog Duffy loved to swim in the resaca, so the children lay on their floaties and hung on to the dog's tail to be pulled through the water. Gretchen's brother Steve and his friend Bobby White had a canoe to go up and down the resaca where they saw alligator gar seven and eight feet long.

Cipriano Cardenas remembers swimming across the Fort Brown Resaca when he was at Texas Southmost College in the mid-sixties with Joe Colunga and Juan Carlos Moreno. They swam over to the hotel and back, sometimes pausing for a dip in the hotel pool. One day he got a bad cramp in his leg and would have drowned if Juan Carlos had not pulled him out. He says they used to do the San Benito stroke, which is pushing the reeds aside with each stroke because there is so much vegetation in the way.

Now few people swim in the resaca as it seems polluted. Katy Cowan says that the resaca was clean enough for swimming the twelve years she lived there, but when the family moved back in 1977, it had been contaminated, and they didn't swim there anymore. Some people had feared swimming in the resacas much earlier though as Agnes Browne says her grandmother wouldn't let her go swimming in the resaca. She thinks her grandmother was afraid there might be arsenic in the resaca as people put arsenic on the growing vegetables to kill the insects. She remembers that one time a friend had a birthday party at V.I.C.C.; her grandmother said she could go to the party but could not go in swimming. Olive Rathjen says the resacas were lovely and clear until the late forties when a polio epidemic hit. Afraid of catching polio, people stopped swimming in the resacas. She says maybe people resumed swimming after the polio vaccine was developed because later when she had children of her own, they went swimming, fishing,

and boating in the resaca that Barnard Street crosses behind St. Mary's Church and even ate the fish they caught. Finally the boys had to stop because the water became polluted. Her husband Walter says his dogs still like to swim in the resaca. Chula Griffin thinks maybe the swimming has stopped because of the poisons such as DDT used on vegetables in farming. Ben Reyna says that around 1980 P.U.B. put up signs near the resacas saying not to use them as a recreational area because they were not safe, but after a time the signs disappeared.

According to Adolf Dittman, mostly people fished. For bait they could find angleworms along the shore and grubworms in the tepeguaje limbs that had been cut off by girdling beetles. Chula Griffin says her boyfriends made doughballs to use for bait. Larry Löf adds that the boys used a safety pin for a hook and a cane pole. Alfredo Muñoz remembers catching catfish and gar and eating them. He says when he and his friends caught carp they gave them away because they had too many bones, but some of their neighbors ate them. Mike Gonzalez says that in the fifties there was a drought so bad that people could walk out and pick up the catfish and bass where the water was being reduced to a puddle. Genaro Lopez says when he was in junior high in the late fifties and early sixties, he and his friends use to catch big catfish to eat. He remembers riding his bicycle out to Southmost and catching large bass. Sometimes there were tiny stinging ants, but he was a fanatic fisherman so he got bit to catch fish. As he didn't have a rod, he used a hand line, a coil of string in one hand with a weight and a hook on the end. He tied the other end to a stick in the ground. To bait his hook he stole masa from his mother, sometimes adding vanilla to make it more fragrant. He also caught turtles. Rene Torres says he and his friends used to skip school and fish in the resaca behind Resaca Elementary that has now been filled in. They used the Eighth Street Bridge, crossed the resaca, and sat on the pipes to fish because nobody could see them. They also caught turtles to play with. Milton Rodriguez remembers that he and a friend used to sit and fish on the railroad bridge

over the resaca that runs west of Paredes Line between Price and Galveston. They listened for the trains to get out of the way, but because of the brush they couldn't see far down the tracks. One day, they realized a train was coming when it was almost upon them. Milton's friend pushed him into the water to keep him from being run over. The friend rolled down and caught a rock. It was a good thing because he couldn't swim.

Some people even have memories of hunting on the resacas. Frances Browne remembers that her father hunted ducks on the resaca, and Billy Faulk remembers hunting them too. Adolf Dittman tells of sitting on the resaca bank with some Winter Texans at his trailer park when an enormous mass of ducks came flying in. One of the Texans asked him to get him a duck, so Adolf went for his shotgun. He lay down and aimed low across the water, killing, so he says, eighteen ducks with one shot. He also remembers with Bobby Belton watching Ernest Fernandez on the other side of the resaca fire a slingshot at some ducks. Ernest hit one, which landed at the boys' feet, and came hurrying across the nearby dam to claim, "Mine."

Lots of Brownsville residents have memories of boating on the resacas. My family had a canoe. We portaged across Padre Island Boulevard at Four Corners and lay flat in the canoe to get through the pipe and under Boca Chica (lots of spider webs there). Ben Reyna says he went canoeing in the resaca behind Cobbleheads with a friend who was in Boy Scouts. Teresa Gibson remembers canoeing and portaging with her children when she lived on Robindale out by Rose Lawn Cemetery. One time their swimming dog, a Weimaraner, followed them too far, and seeing that the dog was exhausted, she stood up and balanced herself in the canoe to pull the animal to safety. Paul Gilmore says he and his friends built rafts out of palm logs to paddle in the resaca. Larry Löf says the boys built little rafts out of branches or just tied a couple logs together to go exploring in the drain culverts coming into the resaca. Adolf Dittman says he started with a washtub, but it was easy to tip over and went in a circle when he tried to paddle as

he could only reach one side at a time. After that the boys built their own individual boats with sheets of galvanized iron, making a prow by nailing them to a two by four in front and a stern in the back with a piece of two by ten. Then the cracks around the boards were sealed with tar. The paddles were long sticks with old license plates nailed to them. The boys conducted sea battles trying to sink each other, sometimes ten or twelve boats at a time. A danger was that they could cut themselves on the sharp edges at the top of the sides where the iron had been cut. At one point Adolf's older cousins had a rowboat with the stern out. They could go boating as long as they stayed in the front, their weight tipping the stern up in the air and out of the water. Most of the time when they were boating the aim was just to get to the other side.

When I first came to teach at UTB in 1973, on pretty days I could see the lovely sailboats on the Ft. Brown Resaca as students learned to sail for Physical Education credit. Ben Reyna says he took one of those sail boating classes at T.S.C. with Werner Steinbach; the sailing program used the natural resources of the area and gave access to sailing "to kids like me." John Wood says his family did quite a bit of sailing in their "little bitty" fourteen-foot sailboat, which was "really good for our kids growing up." Another boating experience of Adolf Dittman was going with Arthur Edelstein out in a canvas kayak with a sail. There were fence posts through the middle of the resaca. Adolf had learned to tack into the wind, and they were really moving. They hit a post pointed toward them and tore a hole in the kayak. They took off their shoes, pulled the boat off the post, and waded home.

With boats, frequently there is water skiing, which apparently occurred mainly on the Ft. Brown Resaca. According to Mike Gonzalez, Juliet Garcia, current President of the U.T.B., was an excellent water skier. Her father had a boat, and frequently she went skiing on the Fort Brown Resaca. Mark Lund remembers Dale Baldauf's saying that when he was young he and his friends went waterskiing on the resacas by pulling the skier with a jeep driving along the bank. Michael Puckett says he learned to water

ski in Acacia Lake. Joe Hinojosa says that water skiing is not feasible on the resacas today, but is not prohibited except on the Ft. Brown Resaca. There is still quite a bit of it in Resaca del Rancho Viejo by Rio del Sol. Ida Laura Burns says people used to ski a lot in the resaca parallel to Lazy Acres where she lived, and they still do some. Larry Löf remembers that, on Sunday, people watched the water skiers at Ft. Brown, which had a couple of ski jumps. Cipriano Cardenas and Yolanda Gonzalez remember that people went to the Fort Brown Resaca banks to picnic and watch the skiers.

The banks of the resacas also had good places to play. Billy Faulk remembers playing around the resaca as a child as do many other adults in Brownsville. Ben Reyna says he and his friends used to hang out around the resacas. They rode their bikes, lay on the grass, looked at the palm trees, and threw rocks into the water. He says Ringgold Park was full of families picnicking and enjoying the resaca. Ben also says that with resacas in front of and behind Hanna High School many students hang out around the resacas. Paul Gilmore remembers making paths along the resaca bank. Bill Davis tells of Alton Gloor digging a resaca in a swampy place where Barnard Road crosses near Cottonwood and Poplar Streets. After the resaca was dug, Gloor left a mountain of dirt for about six months. Bill, in junior high at the time, and his friends in the neighborhood put on cut-off jeans, carried water to the top of the mountain to make a mudslide, and then slid down. Adolf Dittman says the children also dug caves in the moist cool soil on the sides of the resacas. The little caves were only to crawl into and were a good place to cool off in the hot summertime.

The resacas were likewise a good place to get into mischief. Genaro Lopez says the boys put firecrackers in mud and threw them into the water, where they exploded as they hit the water. Adolf Dittman says the boys liked to throw empty bottles into the water and shoot at them with air rifles. When the broken bottles sank, they were forgotten until somebody playing in the water stepped on some of the glass, cut a foot, and had to be taken across Central

Boulevard to the hospital. Another of the pranks was to fill a gallon jar three-quarters full of water, make a little cloth sack for carbide, and put that in the jar just under the lid. When this "bomb" was thrown into the resaca, the carbide got wet, made acetylene gas, and exploded, making a depth charge. One day, Adolf hooked the ear of a friend who was fishing with him. The friend insisted he would not go to the hospital to get the hook out because he was not supposed to be there playing, and Adolf would have to get the hook out. Adolf tried to push the hook on through, the child screamed, and Adolf's mother came running. Adolf's mother took the boy to the hospital, and he never came over to play again.

Besides the active pleasures in play on and by the resacas, the resacas affect the spirit with solace and tranquility. Paul Kavanaugh says when he and his family canoed on the resaca it seemed as if they had left Brownsville for a nature reserve as they saw gar, birds, turtles, and egrets. Many others enjoy the resacas for the natural, peaceful setting. Joe Binder says he has a gazebo down by the water where he sits to read sometimes and watch the pelicans, sometimes fifty or sixty at a time. Teresa Gibson says mostly her family sat on the dock and watched the sunset over the resaca to the west, enjoying the wildlife, especially the birds. Gretchen Nash says that she and her brother and sister went to the resaca to be alone. It was a sacred, peaceful place to sit, like going to the beach to take away all cares. Adolf Dittman says some evenings he or his father built a fire on the resaca bank when the Winter Texans were at the trailer park, and they sat around the fire in the winter. Ducks came up from the bays and fed on the finfeather. They were pretty flying against the moon.

With all the enjoyment on the resacas, there is still much to be concerned about at present. One can get hurt in the resaca as Ruben Gonzalez testifies. Out in his inflatable boat with his friend Edwin Duran, he saw an overturned, abandoned boat with plants growing out of it. He and his father had talked of owning a boat to go fishing. Ruben got into the resaca, which was not deep, dragged the boat out of the weeds, and was pulling it toward the shore near

Four Corners when he noticed garbage, bottles, hubcaps, rebar, and chain link fence and thought perhaps it was not safe to walk there barefoot. Then he felt a pain in his foot. It took twenty-five stitches to sew his foot back together.

Ruben says that with every step he went into the mud a foot or two. Huge air bubbles came up and the smell was disgusting as if he were walking in sewage. Adolf Dittman thinks raw sewage may now be going into the resacas, having seen feces in the water and steam rising from the storm sewer drain outlets (decay makes the water warmer). Jaime Peña, Conservation Biologist at Gladys Porter Zoo, says the top complaint he has about the resacas is that they smell bad. The water dries fast on hot summer days, and the water level is much lower than it used to be. The zoo personnel try to aerate the water, but the algae bloom in the summer, and even though the moats are cleaned every week, the algae make the water seem dirty. In the winter, when it is cool and the algae are not blooming, the moats look and smell pretty. Ida Laura Burns says that putting pipes under the roads instead of building bridges so that the water can flow freely has caused the problem. In 1952, she and her sister Margaret Clark put up a fight to keep Acacia Lake from being dammed up and succeeded, but that is when the resaca was blocked at Morningside Road as it is today. She says that until the fifties the water flowed freely on past Southmost Road.

Adolf Dittman and Larry Löf have similar views about the change in the resacas and the need to let them return to a more natural state where the water was clearer. Before the city's resacas were connected to the city's drainage system, the water in the resacas came from the nearby streets in the wet season, and in the dry season the resacas were pasture. The weeds and grass grew lush in the alluvial soil, and then a good rain came to create a temporary resaca that might last for a couple of years. As the grass and weeds decayed, they made an acid water full of oxygen that is clearer than a basic water. The children could climb up in the trees and act as spotters to tell the ones fishing where the fish were. Also,

as soon as it rained and the resacas filled, the Texas Game and Fish Commission restocked the resacas from the fish hatchery on the northwest side of town. Finfeather, a type of fern-like moss, grew in the resacas, but now they have scummoss or stargrass, which grows at the top of the water and makes it look bad. During drought, the fish were concentrated more and more in shrinking pools—big goldfish and alligator gar. Then the resaca stank. Some fish dug down in the mud to survive. Rains came in June or August and September, filling up the pools, and soon the resacas were restocked. When they were wet, the game fish grew, and the ducks and geese landed again. When the resacas were allowed to dry and reflood naturally, they had a lot of vegetation to feed the fish and work its way through the food chain, decaying organic matter. After Falcon Dam was built in the early fifties, flooding became more controlled, but the resacas were less healthy. The resacas are now considered wetlands protected by the Army Corps of Engineers, and they can't be filled in. If people did not interfere, the resacas would fill in naturally as the delta would flood and silt up; however, the water level was already dropping before the construction of Falcon Dam because farmers were taking water out of the Rio Grande River in Colorado long before it reached South Texas. As the natural cycle has been taken from the resacas, they have grown sick, no longer allowed to dry out and refill, no longer able to flow from one end to the other. The resaca between the Life and Health Sciences Building and the new Business-Education Complex at U.T.B., a natural cul-de-sac, provides a living example of what happens if the natural cycle is allowed to occur. At present it has shallow water with dead trees standing in it. The trees grew in dry years, and a wet year filled the resaca again, killing the trees. Elsa Davis and Larry Löf agree that it is much better to leave this resaca in its natural state.

Other answers have been applied to the resacas. John Wood points out that the city several years ago put in aerators to add oxygen to the water, and most of the resacas are flowing, which keeps them aerated. However, the shallower they are, the more prone they are

to grow unwanted weeds as the sun hits the bottom. He says that when people saw the city's aerators they wanted them, and the city agreed to install and maintain them if property owners purchased them. Some of the aerators even have lights. Richard, Leal, and Lopez agree about the aerators, but insist what the resacas need is rain, which gives them a life-cleansing rebirth.

The resacas are artificially kept full by pumping. Genaro Lopez, John Wood, and Raul Besteiro were members of an *ad hoc* Brownsville Resaca and Drainage Commission formed in the eighties by the City Commission to study what should be done. They were to work on water transition, making a conduit to the water treatment plant, increase drainage, help control flooding, and dredge on the sides. After examining the situation, they planned to build a retaining wall and dredge the resacas, tossing the mud behind the wall, but residents living on the banks complained, because the mud dredged up would have been an ugly, stinky mess for a while. Lopez says that it would have created more land for the owners, but that it would have been too costly. He thinks it still needs to be done, but won't be because there are too many anti-tax people and it would cost a lot. The resacas would be dredged with a floating barge with a vacuum cleaner that would deposit the mud behind the retaining wall. The owners with title to the property to the middle of the resaca would need to assume the upkeep of the retaining wall.

Joe Hinojosa says the city is talking with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers about help in dredging the resacas. When the depth is low and the heat high, the water loses oxygen and the algae take over, blocking out the sunlight. At night especially, fish struggle because of low oxygen, and the algae also take oxygen to decompose, compounding the problem for the already struggling fish. The big fish succumb first. The Corps of Engineers is interested from an environmental standpoint, and negotiations are now in Phase 2—Feasibility. The questions now being asked are what can be done, and what are the environmental benefits?

Joe Hinojosa says there are now more regulations against contaminants from factories. Industries are considered *point sources*, and there are many regulations controlling contaminants coming from them. Homes are considered *non-point sources*, and have fewer controls. This situation is changing as more regulations are coming for non-point sources. The city will need to document what it is doing to teach people about car oil leaks and construction projects and their environmental impact. The city perhaps will develop a program with the university to educate people on the environmental issues. Many vocational opportunities will develop concerning environmental issues. Actually, there is now less loading from agriculture and industry than there used to be. Ideally, the resacas could be restored to their historic depths and used more recreationally. If the shores are restored, there will be more butterflies and birds to bring people here.

Ida Laura Burns says that the water needs to be kept moving, and then the water will clean itself. She hates to see the "little bitty pipes" put under the roads that cross the resacas when bridges could be built across them. In her mid-nineties and living in Wichita Falls near her grandchildren, she has these words of wisdom for Brownsville, "Protect our resacas because they're really beautiful." And I'm happy to give her the last word.

Endnotes

1 Milo Kearney, *Stories Brownsville Told Its Children: A Child's History of Brownsville* (Austin: Sunbelt Eakin, 2001), pp. 1-8.

2 I talked with many people, whose names and the dates I talked with them are given here. Their contributions are acknowledged within the paper: Marty Heaner (5-12-05), Mike Gonzalez (9-27-05), Genaro Lopez (11-9-05, 11-16-05), Yolanda Gonzalez (1-12-06, 1-18-06), Glenda Heaner (1-12-06), Frances Browne (1-12-06), Agnes Browne (1-12-06), Katy Cowan (1-12-06), Dan Rentfro (1-12-06), Ruben Gonzalez (1-13-06), Michael Puckett (1-13-06), Mark Lund (1-13-06), Jaime Peña (1-13-06), K. K. Walker (1-13-06, 1-22-06), Norman Richard (1-13-06), Katy Cowan (1-13-06, 1-22-06), Paul Kavanaugh (1-13-06), Olive Rathjen (1-13-06), Walter Rathjen (1-13-06), Joe Hinojosa (1-16-06), Chula Griffin (1-17-06), Ida Laura Burns (1-17-06), Paul Gilmore (1-17-06), John Wood (1-17-06), Larry Löf (1-18-06),

Gretchen Nash (1-18-06), Rene Torres (1-18-06), Edna Garcia (1-20-06), Billy Faulk (1-25-06, 1-26-06), Bill Davis (1-25-06), Elsa Davis (1-25-06), Marshall Younkman (1-26-06), Hector Garcia (1-26-06), Alfredo Muñoz (1-26-06), Cipriano Cardenas (1-26-06), Joe Binder (1-26-06), Milton Rodriguez (1-27-06), Ben Reyna (1-27-06), Joe Colunga (1-30-06), June Dittman (1-31-06), Adolf Dittman (1-31-06, 2-2-06), Teresa Gibson (2-1-06), Rosie Harrison (2-8-06).

3 William A. Adams and Anthony K. Knopp, *Portrait of a Border City: Brownsville, Texas* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1997), p. 5.

4 Jean Louis Berlandier, *Journey to Mexico During the Years 1826 to 1834*, Trans. Sheila M. Ohlendorf, Josette M. Bigelow, and Mary M. Standifer, Vol. 2. (Austin: Texas State Historical Assn, 1980), p. 439.

5 José Raúl Canseco Botello, *Historia de Matamoros*, 2nd ed. (H. Matamoros, Tamaulipas: Talleres Tipográficos de Litográfica Jardin, 1981), pp. 17-18.

6 Walter Prescott Webb and H. Bailey Carroll, eds., *The Handbook of Texas*, Vol. 2 (Austin: Texas State Historical Assn., 1952), p. 465.

7 Norman Richard, Ricardo Leal, and Genaro Daniel Lopez, *Lost Bends of the Rio Grande: Brownsville's Oxbow Lakes* (Brownsville: UTB/TSC Media Services, 1997).

8 Lieut. W. H. Chatfield, compiler, *The Twin Cities of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande* (New Orleans: E. P. Branclao, 1893). Rpt. 1959 by Herbert Davenport Memorial Fund, The Brownsville Historical Assn., and Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Society), p. 28.

9 Webb and Carroll, p. 465.

10 National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Atlas, 7 February 2006, http://www.preservationatlas.org/nthpviewer/RemoteMap.aspx?num=20&type=ALL&ziponly=1.

11 Hector Zamarripa, "Löf prepares for restoration project of Kraigher house," *The Collegian* 58.16 (Jan 23, 2006), pp. 1, 4.

12 Antonio N. Zavaleta, "Resacas and Bancos in Brownsville History," *More Studies in Brownsville History*, ed. Milo Kearney (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), pp. 3-30.

13 Ruby A. Wooldridge and Robert B. Vezzetti, *Brownsville: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Va: Donning Company, 1982), p. 18.

14 There is not agreement about where the nutria came from. Genaro Lopez says the nutria were brought here from South America to raise for fur but escaped and established themselves in our resacas.. Larry Löf says that the nutria escaped from Louisiana during a hurricane and worked their way down here. John Wood says they were brought here to eliminate weeds, maybe in the fifties or early sixties.

15 T. R. Fehrenbach later became an important Texas historian, writing *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans*.

Personajes e Instituciones en la Salud Pública de Matamoros

por

Rosaura Dávila de Cuéllar

Uno de los primeros profesionistas médicos cuyo registro aparece en Matamoros en 1842, que aseveró tener como patria Coahuila y Texas y que fue el primer presidente municipal con ideología liberal, fue el Dr. Miguel Tovar, quién tomó posesión el 27 de junio de 1866. En 1844, sus edificios públicos eran dos casas consistoriales, una parroquia, un hospital militar y uno civil, dos panteones, una capilla particular, una cárcel, una aduana, un cuartel militar, una Casamata, 8 escuelas de niños y 4 de niñas, y una botica que perteneció al científico suizo Louis Berlandier.

El 4 y 5 de agosto de 1844, Matamoros fue azotado por un ciclón, y fueron devastados Brazos de Santiago y la Boca del Río, muriendo 300 personas. Se desata una epidemia de viruela y sarampión, lo que trajo como consecuencia el cierre de las escuelas debido a la fuerte incidencia de las epidemias entre los niños en edad escolar. El censo arrojó una población total de 11,823 habitantes. Niños registrados eran 592, y muertes 448, lo que significaba que el índice de mortalidad era bastante alto, debido sin duda a las enfermedades.

El 8 de julio de 1848, el Gobernador de Tamaulipas enviaba a Matamoros sus razones, explicando la conveniencia de construir un Hospital Civil en este puerto, aseverando que el continuo tráfico que se tenía con Nueva Orleáns, junto con algunas otras causas, habían influido para que algunas veces fuera infectado de epidemias que no se conocían. Añadiendo que, en caso de necesitarse un médico, contaba con la autorización del Gobierno del Estado para contratarlo. En el informe del Gobernador de Tamaulipas, Jesús Cárdenas, en 1849 da cuenta de que el Estado

tiene más de 120,000 habitantes, y reconoce que la guerra, el cólera, y otras causas similares han afectado el crecimiento de su población. En un informe enviado por la Junta de Sanidad de Matamoros formada por Manuel Ortega, Antonio Lafón, y Luis Berlandier a la superioridad el 27 de junio de 1849, se indica que la viruela (epidemia característica de las costas) había disminuido a partir de que Manuel Mier y Terán había traído la vacuna para combatirla en 1830.

Desde ese año y durante 19 años, la población resultó afectada por el cólera asiático, causando graves daños en 1833 y 1849, mientras que la fiebre amarilla provocó en 1841 una gran mortandad, similar a la del cólera en 1833. En 1849, se desata en varias ciudades de la República Mexicana una epidemia de cólera morbus, provocando en dos meses el fallecimiento de 500 personas y el cierre de escuelas. Se empobrecieron los ayuntamientos, influyendo grandemente las epidemias y la sequía. En esta época, se establecieron en Matamoros los siguientes médicos: Manuel Mirando Ortega, Pedro Santos, Santiago Paysant, Santiago Ysasi, Bonifacio González, Nicolás Cataldo, y José Manuel Jofre, quién además fue catedrático del Instituto Literario de San Juan. Se contaba además con la "Botica Nueva," propiedad de Isidoro Pérez, sito en Abasolo y 9.

El 8 de enero de 1855, ocupaba la Presidencia Municipal de Matamoros Don José María Cavazos y Jefe de la Plaza, Gobernador y Comandante Militar de Tamaulipas, el Gral. Adrián Woll. Ese día, se firmó, ante el notario Don Joaquín Argüelles, la escritura del Hospital Civil "Dr. Florencio Anaya Ruiz" a favor del Gobierno federal por la cantidad de $1,400.00, que fuera el precio pagado por el terreno y una finca construida allí. El edificio funcionó durante seis años como hospital militar durante la guerra de Rojos y Crinolinos. Se encontraba ubicado en la calle 8 entre Hidalgo e Iturbide. De esa época destaca Doña Paula Fuentes, titulada en Monterrey en 1867 con el título de Obstetricia. El Dr. Manuel Carpio llegó a Matamoros en 1863 en la expedición del coronel Manuel Balbotín, y vivió en esta ciudad hasta 1893, año en que fue asesinado para robarlo. El farmacéutico italiano José L.

Calderoni llegó primero a San Fernando, pero después se trasladó a Matamoros, en donde estableció la "Botica Minerva," hasta que en 1913 se cambió a Brownsville, Texas. Él, con su esposa, María de la Luz Santoscoy, formaron toda una dinastía de farmacéuticos, entre los que se encontraban Jesús, trabajando en la "Botica de Jesús Calderoni" en la esquina noreste de González y 7.

En 1872, figuraban en el censo los médicos Carlos Macmanus, inglés que trabajaba en el Hospital Civil, miembro del Casino y en el Instituto de San Juan impartió la cátedra de inglés; Francisco de Asís Molas, español, maestro del Instituto Literario de San Juan y primer presidente del Casino Matamorense; Carlos de Castro Combe, Zeferino Castañeda, Miguel Tovar, Santiago Yrard, y Francisco G. Carrasco, catedrático de Historia Natural en el Instituto Literario de San Juan. Las boticas de "León" de Eduardo Bremer y "Scholtz," en Comercio y 8 y la de "Brayda," surtían las medicinas de la población.

Para 1873, la Secretaría de Guerra y Marina informó que el Jefe de Armas de Matamoros afirmaba que parte del edificio del Hospital Civil era propiedad del Gobierno federal, y pidió que se girasen órdenes a fin de que se le devolvieran. El Ayuntamiento presidido por el Gral. Juan N. Cortina se negó a entregarlo. Defendió el derecho del Ayuntamiento a las fincas y terreno que tenía el "Anaya Ruiz" a título de dominio y posesión ya que durante trece años y con inversiones de $12,000.00 en mejoras y construcción realizadas por los diversos ayuntamientos. Proporcionó servicio tanto a la ciudadanía como al ejército, sin ningún costo adicional para la federación, alegando por tal concepto derechos de propiedad justos y legítimos y que después de la mencionada guerra el Jefe de la Línea del Norte lo entregó al Ayuntamiento de Matamoros. Durante algunos años trabajó gratuitamente como director del hospital el Mayor Médico Militar Miguel Barragán Flores.

Medio siglo después de haberse comprado el terreno y la casa del hospital, uno de los últimos actos del gobierno municipal de Don Rafael Solís de la Garza fue aceptar, con fecha 8 de diciembre de

1905, el avalúo de Hacienda sobre esas propiedades, facilitando el camino al siguiente Ayuntamiento de Don Marcelino Rougier para finalizar las cosas. El matamorense Dr. Gilberto Cicero Márquez estudió en la Escuela Médico Militar, y regresó en 1902 como director del Hospital Militar, cuyo local estaba dividido en militar y civil. Fundada por Isauro Moya en 1911, la "Botica Matamoros" se encontraba en las calles Sexta y Morelos.

El "Anaya" se convierte en Hospital de Sangre para atender los heridos de los combates del 3 y 4 de junio de 1913 y en 1915, siendo director el Dr. Arnoldo Krum Heller, militar y escritor. Ya para 1915, se encontraba en Matamoros el doctor alemán Albert Hodenberg, quién tenía su cuarto en la Botica Nueva, en donde recetaba. En 1919, el Dr. Benito Hernández fue director del hospital civil "Dr. Florencio Anaya." Estudió su carrera profesional en la Universidad Nacional de México. También fue Jefe de Salubridad y Asistencia de 1929 a 1932. Falleció en Matamoros en 1942. Aurora Arrese de Castillo, originaria de Monterrey, N.L., estudió en la Normal, y trabajó en el Instituto Hussey. Presidenta de la Sociedad de Beneficencia Higia, durante su período, se compró una autoclave para el hospital civil. Siendo alcalde el Sr. Alfonso López, se organizó en 1927 la Unidad Sanitaria Municipal, dirigida por el Teniente Coronel Florencio Anaya Ruiz. Recibían subsidio del Gobierno Estatal y una participación en las cuotas de servicio de agua potable, además de cobrar cuotas médicas por servicio médico y medicinas.

El 12 de junio de 1943, azotó muy cerca de Matamoros un fuerte tornado, que dejó muerte y destrucción a su paso. De la capital mexicana llegó el Dr. Enrique Contreras, miembro activo del Cuerpo de Ambulancias de la Delegación Central de la Cruz Roja, como parte integrante de un numeroso contingente formado por doctores, enfermeras, y voluntarios, que se trasladó al lugar del siniestro. Después de realizada la tarea, Contreras propone a las autoridades locales encabezadas por el Sr. Ladislao Cárdenas, Jr., para que apoyaran la idea de formar un cuerpo de ambulantes dependientes de la Cruz Roja.

La fecha de fundación de la Cruz Roja de Matamoros tiene lugar el 20 de septiembre de 1946. Al iniciar la construcción de su propio edificio en terrenos anexos al Hospital Civil "Dr. Florencio Anaya Ruiz," y donados por la Administración Municipal con entrada en la calle Independencia entre 8 y 9, y que en término de 8 meses, fue concluido e inaugurado por el Gral Raúl Gárate Legleu, Gobernador del Estado de Tamaulipas. Además del Dr. Contreras, se considera que sus fundadores eran Don Guadalupe Morales, presidente de la Asociación; Don José J. Martínez, tesorero; Don Vicente Fernández, Administrador; y el Dr. Raúl del Río Dávila, director médico, puesto que ocupó hasta julio de 1952, en que fue sustituido por el Dr. Manuel F. Rodríguez Brayda. Sus dos primeras enfermeras eran Enriqueta Barbosa y Ma. Guadalupe Aguirre Vda. de Fuentes. El Dr. Tirso Guerra Elizondo estudió en la Facultad de Medicina de la UNAM, y regresó en 1946, llegando a Matamoros, en donde, durante 15 años, ocupó la dirección del "Anaya Ruiz." El Dr. Ernesto Chanes Chanes, fundador de la primera Sala Pediátrica cuando era director del hospital, el Dr. Emilio Guerrero, el presidente de la Junta Municipal, y el Dr. Enrique Contreras, trabajaron allí. El edificio fue gracias a la colaboración de siete familias matamorenses: Sr. Héctor del Valle, Sr. Amador Garza, Sr. Luis H. Ávila, Sr. Alberto Terrazas, Sr. Alberto Pacheco, Sr. Miguel Treviño Emparan, y Sr. Shelby Longoria y sus respectivas familias.

El 12 de diciembre de 1948, el Dr. Julián de la Garza Kelly, Director de Servicios Rurales Cooperativos de la Zona Norte del Estado, inaugura el Hospital Ejidal, ubicado en Matamoros 5ª y 6ª, el cual tenía 25 camas, una ambulancia, y vehículos para visitas domiciliarias.

El Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social se inicia en Matamoros como consulta externa que se prestaba en la planta alta de lo que se convertiría en Mueblería Rubiano allá por 1957. Correspondía a la Caja Regional del Seguro Social en Monterrey, N.L., al frente de la cual se encontraba el Dr. Arnoldo Saldívar Silva, quién celebró un contrato entre dicho organismo y la Unión de Médicos, que se

había integrado en la ciudad. No fue sino hasta cinco años después que empezó a funcionar con sus características actuales cuando se construyó su primer edificio, y se nombra como su primer director médico al Dr. Pedro Garza Cantú. El Dr. Garza Cantú era originario de Monterrey. Llegó a Matamoros en 1946, y trabajó en el Hospital Civil "Dr. Florencio Anaya Ruiz" durante 17 años. Dirigió el IMSS de septiembre de 1962 a junio de 1975. Presidente de la Asociación Médica Matamorense, colaboró también con la Cruz Roja. El Dr. Ernesto Chanes Chanes fue invitado a colaborar en la Unión Médica por el Dr. Rolando García de León, primero como pediatra de la consulta externa con el Dr. Ernesto Siller, el Dr. José de Alba González, y el Dr. Carlos Gaytán. Los servicios hospitalarios se prestaban en la Clínica de "León y Garza" y en la Clínica "López Padrón." En la década de los cincuenta, tanto el Dr. Juvenal Rendón como el Dr. Manuel Argueta se dedicaban a la práctica privada y atendían a los pacientes de las fábricas.

Al iniciarse la construcción de la Clínica Hospital del IMSS, se vieron en la urgencia de volver a fundar una Escuela de Enfermería con apoyo de la UAT, para poder cubrir las necesidades del nosocomio y el futuro hospital "Dr. Alfredo Pumarejo." Terminaba 1960. El Jefe de los Servicios Foráneos del ISSSTE, Manuel Islas, inició los trámites a fin de brindar servicio médico a los empleados federales o estatales que trabajaban con alguna dependencia federal. Se nombró al Dr. Felipe Ramírez Mariles, a fin de que seleccionara al personal médico que impartiría el servicio. Se brindaría únicamente consulta externa en la Clínica "De León y Garza," sito en las calles Amapolas y Primera de la Colonia Jardín, en donde estuvo trabajando durante cinco años. Se nombró al Dr. Raúl del Río Dávila como su director.

Es en octubre de 1961 que inició la escuela de Enfermería dependiente de la UAT, con el apoyo de los médicos del IMSS, del Centro de Salud, y de la maestra enfermera Socorro García Gallardo del Hospital Ejidal. Las clases eran por las tardes en una aula prestada por el Dr. Jorge Burguete. Entre los catedráticos fundadores eran las siguientes enfermeras: Socorro García

Gallardo (Hospital Ejidal); Hortensia Cruz de Salgado (IMSS); Micaela Rocha Orta (IMSS); María Luisa Alanís López (Centro de Salud); QFB Amparo Marmolejo Salinas (IMSS); QFB María de los Angeles García de Valdés (IMSS); Laboratorista Clínica, Marta Elva Castillo; Médicos Cirujanos: Pedro Garza Cantú, Director Médico; Carlos Espinosa Meléndez (IMSS); Médicos Familiares: Carlos Mijares Cortés, Neumólogo (IMSS); Enrique Jasso Corti (IMSS); Jorge Zertuche Vargas, Ginecobstetra; Valdemar Solís Ramírez, Traumatólogo; Santiago Godínez Durán (IMSS), Ginecobstetra; Ernesto Chanes Chanes (IMSS), Pediatra, Director de Enfermería. Posteriormente, con el apoyo del rector de la UAT, del Ing. Óscar Guerra Elizondo, Presidente Municipal, y de la enfermera del IMSS y regidora Yolanda Carpio, a través del Dr. Tirso Guerra Elizondo, se consiguió el terreno de la Colonia Alianza y su construcción a través de la UAT, con participación del CAPFCE, inaugurándose su primera etapa en 1975.

Otra institución que cuida de la salud de los matamorenses es el Centro de Salud, sito en las calles Sexta y Nafarrate, dependiente de la Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia de Tamaulipas. Inició sus actividades en junio de 1962, y su primer director fue el Dr. Jorge Burguete Rovira. Sus objetivos eran: 1) mejorar las condiciones de salud de la población; 2) participar en las campañas de vacunación masiva; 3) exámenes de salud, y 4) visitas a edificios públicos.

Las boticas existentes en Matamoros por los sesentas eran: la "Mercado" (ubicada en Matamoros 9 y 10, propiedad del Dr. Dagoberto Paz; "Universal" en 9 y Abasolo de Francisco Ledesma); "Chapa," en Sexta y Abasolo (de Roberto Chapa); "Ortega," en 7 y Matámoros; "Principal," en Sexta y González; "Anáhuac," en 8 y González de Eugenio V. Flores; "La Paz," en 9 González y Abasolo; y "Nueva," en Abasolo y 9. Don José Delgado García fue propietario de las Farmacias Nacional 1, 2, 3 y 4 y la "Tepeyac". Ubicadas en Sexta y 20 de Noviembre, frente al Mercado, era "Treviño Zapata." Otras eran en Primera y Ocampo, en Sexta y Hernán Cortés, y en Solerneau y Cuarta.

Fue en la década de los setenta que la Dra. Estela de los Reyes ingresó al IMSS. Allí ejercían el Dr. Manuel Argueta y Juventino Pérez García en Urgencias; en Consulta Externa, Roberto Pérez Montemayor, Mendiola, Zárate de la Borbolla, Jasso Corti como dermatólogo, y en el hospital el Dr. Ernesto Chanes Chanes, Jorge Zertuche y Santiago Godínez, y el Dr. Antonio Castillo como radiólogo. Siendo presidente de la Junta Federal de Mejoras Materiales Don Francisco Covarrubias en 1967, tenía muy buena relación con el Secretario de la Presidencia de la República, Dr. Emilio Martínez Manautou, ante quién gestionó la construcción de un moderno Hospital Regional que pudiese brindar atención no sólo a los locales sino también a gente de toda la región.

El nosocomio fue construido en terrenos de la Fraccionadora Atlas, que se localizaban en la Avenida Canales entre Roberto F. García y Avenida Universidad. Fue terminado en 1969. Se entregó a la Junta Municipal de Asistencia Social presidida en esa época por el Dr. Pablo Balboa Bujanos, quién realizó el cambio del "Anaya Ruiz" a su nuevo domicilio. Recibiendo el nombre de "Dr. Alfredo Pumarejo," en honor del médico matamorense, alcalde de la ciudad. Trabajó en el "Anaya Ruiz" como delegado sanitario en 1915, encargado del Hospital de Sangre durante el ataque villista a Matamoros. En 1932, tuvo a su cargo la Delegación Federal Sanitaria en Matamoros un miembro fundador de la Asociación Médica. La Junta Federal de Mejoras Materiales invirtió 18 millones de pesos en su construcción, amueblado, y equipamiento. Se nombró como su primer director al Dr. Óscar Emilio Obregón y como Subdirector al Dr. Raúl del Río Dávila, ex director del "Florencio Anaya" y Primer Director Médico de la Cruz Roja. Fueron directores del "Pumarejo" Dr. Valerio Zivec, Dr. Rolando García de León, Dr. Hugo Alberto Virués Virués, Dr. Juvenal Rendón, y Dr. Felipe H. Treviño.

En 1977, el hospital se encontraba sumamente deteriorado por lo que tuvo que dejar de funcionar durante un año y seis meses. Sus servicios los prestaba en el IMSS. Recibió el apoyo del Gobierno Federal y sus directores:

1979-1984 Dr. Jorge Burguete Osorio
1984-1985 Dr. José Montalvo Montelongo
1985-1987 Dr. Horacio Ramírez Oropeza
1987-1990 Dr. Octavio Longoria Cervantes
1990-1992 Dr. Juan Antonio Zarazúa Orta.
1992-1999 Dr. Guillermo Zúñiga García
1999-2001 Dr. Jorge Aguilar Vela
2001-2002 Dr. Ramón Caballero Flores
2002-2005 Dr. Víctor García Fuentes
2005- Dr. Gerardo García Salinas.

Como resultado de una encuesta sobre recursos de salud conducida por el Departamento de Planeación de la UAT, con la asesoría de la Escuela de Salud Pública de México (dependiente de la Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia) y la Escuela de Salud Pública de Houston, Texas, en 1971 determinaron que de las ciudades fronterizas de Tamaulipas era Matamoros la que tenía más probabilidades de tener éxito una escuela de Medicina, sobre todo teniendo en cuenta sus instalaciones hospitalarias. Además, Tampico era la única escuela de ese tipo en el Estado y ya no tenía cupo en sus instalaciones por lo que se rechazaban más de un centenar de solicitudes.

El 4 de octubre de 1972, el Rector de la UAT Lic. Eduardo Garza Rivas inauguró la Facultad de Medicina de Matamoros en presencia del Presidente Municipal, CP. Sergio Martínez Calderoni, de Dionisio Sáenz González, Presidente de la Junta Municipal de Asistencia Social, del Dr. Pedro Garza Cantú, Presidente de la Asociación Médica, del Dr. Valerio Zivec Manich, del Dr. Ernesto Chanes Chanes, su director fundador y del Dr. Hugo Alberto Virués Virués, primer Secretario, los cursos se iniciaron en la Escuela de Enfermería de Matamoros.

Fue el Gobernador del Estado Manuel A. Ravizé, y por intervención del Presidente Municipal, Sergio Martínez Calderoni (que se donaron cinco hectáreas del terreno de la Feria y Exposición Agrícola) que el 6 de agosto de 1974 se colocó la primera piedra.

Un año después, ya estaban instalados en la primera etapa de la escuela. Sus maestros fundadores fueran: Valerio Zivec, Santiago Godínez, Juvenal Rendón Sáenz, Rubén Montalvo Montelongo, Baldemar Solís, Humberto Barrera Ríos, Enrique Jasso Corti, Antonio Cavazos Garza, Hugo Alberto Virués Virués, Ricardo Acuña, Dr. Ernesto Chanes Chanes, Paulina Vela Álvarez, Silvia y Sonia de León, Pedro Garza Cantú, Rubén Quintero, y de la vecina población de Brownsville, Dr. Marco Antonio Benavides y Luis Irurita. Sus directores fueran:

1972-1975 Dr. Ernesto Chanes Chanes.
1975-1976 Dr. Jesús Ramírez Organista
1976-1979 Dr. Octavio Longoria Cervantes
1979-1985 Dr. Víctor Reyes Acosta
1985-1990 Dr. Hugo Torres Díaz Barriga.
1990-1995 Dr. José Manuel Badiola Zárate
1995-1997 QBP Abel Morón Guzmán
1997-1998 Dr. Víctor García Fuentes
1998-2004 Dr. Juan Carlos Cantú Herrera
2004- Dr. Carlos Emilio Aguirre H.

Se recibió apoyo de la Universidad de Texas en San Antonio, Texas, que proporcionó material didáctico y de histología. Se tenía comunicación con hospitales de Estados Unidos como el infantil Driscoll, de Corpus Christi, Texas. Entre las alumnas distinguidas de la institución están Ma. Teresa Pérez Villarreal, investigadora del Gobierno de Estados Unidos en el Departamento de Inmunología de la Universidad John Hopkins; Ma. José Pérez Villarreal, Madrid, España, destacada en Medicina Interna; Amalia Xóchitl Leblanc, a cargo de trasplantes cardiacos en el Hospital del IMSS de Monterrey. Ma. Teresa Castañeda Licón y Miriam Pérez colaboran con el Centro de Biomedicina de la Universidad de Texas en Brownsville, y en la misma Universidad como "profesora invitada" está la catedrática de la Facultad de Medicina, Guadalupe Oliva Ramírez. Médicos exitosos en el Valle de Texas que egresaron de esta facultad fueran Gregory

Mann Jackson y Jaime Silva, cardiólogo. Eso demuestra la activa interacción que existía entre las dos universidades.

En el 2006, el Hospital Alfredo Pumarejo cuenta con 415 trabajadores de base y 200 trabajadores por contrato, 90 médicos y 234 enfermeras. Está catalogado como hospital de segundo nivel por los servicios que ofrece. Atiende al 49 % de su población, y, para marzo, su primera etapa de ampliación y remodelación presentaba un avance considerable, por lo que se iniciaría la licitación de la segunda etapa con una inversión de más de 60 millones de pesos mostrando gran avance la construcción de quirófanos, la ampliación del área de Pediatría y de Ginecología. La primera etapa tuvo una inversión de 25 millones de pesos.

En el Departamento de Enseñanza del Hospital General, se capacita al personal sobre la atención de pacientes con dengue, epidemia que ha aparecido en Tamaulipas, sobre todo después de la llegada del Huracán Emily en julio del 2005. Un mes después, el Dr. Víctor García Fuentes, Jefe de la III Jurisdicción Sanitaria, confirma un total de 21 casos de dengue hemorrágico. Los médicos que participan en la capacitación son: Fernando Céspedes Pizaña, Roberto Sánchez, Alejandro Lozano, Martín Mares y Juan Manuel Osorio.

A mediados de septiembre de 2005, se confirma la presencia de marea roja, ocasionando problemas respiratorios y en los ojos a los pescadores de la playa Bagdad y sus familias, por lo que tuvieron que ser evacuados al Albergue Temporal "Nuestra Señora de San Juan," anexo del Hospital General, en donde habitan familiares de los pacientes internos en el Hospital. En el Hospital "Dr. Norberto Treviño Zapata" del IMSS se tienen 144 camas y consta de salas de: Medicina Interna, Cirugía General, Ginecobstetricia y Pediatría. Además ofrecen las siguientes especialidades: Traumatología, Cardiología, Neumología, Dermatología, Neurocirugía, Otorrinolaringología, Oftalmología, Unidad de Cuidados Intensivos, Área de Topocirugía, Área de Urgencias y Ginecobstetricia. Atiende un promedio de 400 partos al mes.

Trabajan 160 médicos y 400 enfermeras que atienden a 230,000 asegurados en Matamoros. La Clínica Hospital "Rodríguez Brayda" del ISSSTE, atiende a 40,200 personas, la mitad de ellos maestros. Brinda servicio además en la población de Control, Valle Hermoso y San Fernando, Tam. Cuenta con 40 camas y tiene las cuatro áreas básicas, además Ortopedia, Otorrinolaringología, Neumología, Gastroenterología, Oftalmología y Neurología. Trabajan en ella 359 personas de las cuáles 110 son médicos.

En septiembre de 2005, el Gobernador del Estado, Ing. Eugenio Hernández Flores, acompañado del Presidente Municipal Lic. Baltasar Hinojosa Ochoa y su esposa Sra. Marcela R. de Hinojosa, y del Presidente del Patronato, Everardo García Avendaño, inauguró la Subdelegación de la Cruz Roja, ubicada en la colonia Lomas de San Juan que consta de seis consultorios, 2 quirófanos, una sala de urgencias, hospitalización para hombres y mujeres, área de capacitación para personal y estacionamiento para ambulancias.

El actual Jefe de la III Jurisdicción Sanitaria, organismo que aglutina en nuestra ciudad el servicio de salud que ofrecen el poder federal y estatal, es el Dr. Víctor Manuel García Fuentes, egresado de la Facultad de Medicina de Matamoros UAT. Controlados por la Jurisdicción, existen 57 Centros de Salud, con un médico, una enfermera y un promotor. Hay cinco áreas principales a atender: tuberculosis, cáncer de mama y cérvico uterino, el dengue, enfermedades crónico-degenerativas como hipertensión, diabetes, enfermedades diarréicas y adicciones que últimamente se han acentuado.

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Reptile Stories and Myths along the Lower Rio Grande (Rio Bravo)

by

Norman L. Richard

The Lower Rio Grande River flows between the United States and Mexico, creating its delta beginning somewhere near Penitas, Texas. It has its origins in the mountains near Crede, Colorado, and ends in the estuary at the Boca del Rio on Boca Chica Beach, where it joins the Gulf of Mexico. The delta contains many meanders (side loops) on the flat coastal lands, some of which were cut-off during periods of very high water, isolating these meanders as numerous ox-bow lakes locally called resacas. In Spanish, the word *resaca* refers to the land having "taken back" these ancient riverbeds.

It is widely believed that the resacas are home to cottonmouth water moccasins. Common fish-eating diamondback water snakes, which are aggressive but not poisonous, abound there. However, the western cottonmouth has never been able to cross the great sand sheet north of the Rio Grande delta, south of Kingsville, Texas. The Nueces River near Corpus Christi seems to be their southernmost stronghold in Texas. A related species, the *cantil*, is found in Mexico, far to the south of Brownsville.

Southern Texas has long been a collecting destination for amateur herpetologists and others. At the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, William A. Lieberman, also called William A. "Snake" King (1877-1952) settled in Brownsville. He operated a "geek" show (snake show), requiring him to replenish his stock from time-to-time, and the Brownsville area was the perfect place to collect reptiles. In Brownsville, he came to be called "Snake King" for having set up an enterprise called Snakeville in 1907. This snake farm was located on Old Alice Road. Eventually Palm Boulevard was cut through the area near the compound. From this

location, snakes were shipped to the rest of the United States. Snake King and his wife set up outlying camps and collected reptiles for the business. Eventually, ranchers began supplying such stock as bobcats, ocelots, armadillos, and collard peccaries (javelinas). One animal species imported from Mexico was the Ctenosaur Iguana. Some individuals of this species escaped, and thrived in Ringgold Park for many years, but when the rocks and woodpiles were cleaned up, the lizards lost their hiding places. Boys with rifles and air guns killed the survivors. None exist there now. However, many years later, a student reported that he had shot and buried a large lizard on Highway 511 near the Port of Brownsville. He was afraid he had killed a protected species and was very curious about it. I asked him to find it and let me identify it. The year was 1972 or 1973. This specimen was sent to the eminent herpetologist Roger Conant at the Philadelphia Zoo, and the data was included in a scientific paper on fauna introduced into the area. The snake farm operation burned in the 1930s, though eventually Snakeville was rebuilt. On September 5, 1933, a devastating hurricane struck, releasing numerous wild animals into the area. By this time, Snake King had been importing large cats and many other animals. He had even hired a lion tamer to teach his son, Manuel, to go on tour as "The World's Youngest Lion Tamer." Many of the escaped animals were rounded up, but reports circulated that one of the pythons had swallowed a child. A Los Angeles newspaper called, not to seek confirmation, but to ask the length of the snake. With the death of Snake King in 1952, Snakeville declined and was finally closed about 1956. One footnote seems important. William A. "Snake" King reported emphatically that the cottonmouth had never been found in Brownsville during his lifetime.

Alicante is the name of a town in Spain located on the Mediterranean Sea (Gulf of Alicante) below Valencia. The *Dictionaria de la Lengua Española*, of the Real Academia Española (1984) states that the European alicante snake is very venomous, growing to seven or eight decimeters long. Its mouth is *remangado* (indicating a turned up snout). This snake has also turned up in extreme south Texas

and northern Mexico in regional folk tales under the names of "alicante" (correct) and the improper variations of "alicandre", "alecantre," and "alicantre." Over the past decades, as a teacher and professor, I have sought reptile folk tales from students, relatives, and others. I have found that most of the stories told to me are familiar in many other parts of the country, but a few are unique or have unique embellishments.

Amanda Vasquez's grandmother of Matamoros, Mexico, told her that the alicante lives in tree tops in Mexico, and is a gray snake that changes colors according to its environment. Ranchers tell that this snake hypnotizes nursing mothers in order to suck from the women's breasts, while placing its tail in the infant's mouth to pacify it. Some ranch people say that the alicante also frequently strangles the baby. It is also said that the alicante can hook itself on a cow's shoulder and hang down to suck the cow's teats.

Yolanda Lopez's grandmother, also of Matamoros, said that the alicandre is a long green snake that lives in tree tops, from where it "whips off" its prey and strangles it. It is also known to hypnotize nursing mothers, suck their breasts, and pacify the babies with its tail.

Professor Genaro López, who has lived in Brownsville most of his life, equated the alicante with a rough green non-venemous snake called the *Ophiodrys aestivus*. This slender snake often lives in the small branches of trees that overhang resacas.

In a variation of the above tale, Bruce Aiken said that it is believed that when a nursing mother retires for the night, the snake will crawl into the bed, and suckle milk from her breast. He noted that the snake's teeth would surely awaken the mother and thwart the snake's quest. (*The Brownsville Herald Plus*, 7 September 1994).

The following tale was also given to me by Yolanda López. Her grandmother from Matamoros, Mexico, said that when rattlesnakes need to drink they approach a pool of water, remove their venom sacs, and hide them under a convenient rock. If someone observed

this action and removed the venom from under the rock, the rattlesnake, knowing it had been "undone," would kill itself by banging its head against the ground. Rattlesnakes can also drain themselves of venom before drinking by biting a tree. (Perhaps it may be that the people of the *ranchos* thought that the venom might lose its potency if diluted by water). This tale seems to be entirely unique to the region. Joe Pérez (alias Joe Premont) has made comment on this snake in his tale "Diamondback Snakes," as follows:

> Legend has it that a deadly and much feared Diamondback Rattlesnake that lived in the desert was very protective of his venom. He knew that humans left it alone because they were afraid of his deadly bite. This allowed the snake to live a calm, quiet life. One day, before going down to the river to drink water, the Rattlesnake decided to leave his venom sacs on dry land, so as to not dilute the poison. He hid the venom sacs under a rock, but a hunter saw this and destroyed the poison before the snake returned. Upon finding the sac gone, the Rattlesnake went into a fit of rage. He said, "I'll never be respected without my venom." The venom-less snake knew it could not return to his former life, and decided to leave the desert and make its new home in the river. That is how the very aggressive but non-poisonous Diamondback Watersnake was born.

Joe Pérez's wife, Rosa Canales Pérez, also a folklorist in her own right, has sent me the following:

> When Don Pancho Muñoz spent the night at his ranch outside of town, he always spent the night on the ground under the stars. One night Don Pancho awoke from sleep to see a rattlesnake closely approaching. Not wanting to alarm the snake, he

held his breath to lie perfectly still as the rattlesnake crossed Don Pancho's body and slithered peacefully into the brushland.

Rosa Canales Pérez has been kind enough to share her creative efforts (a poem and a song) with me which she generated after reading a horrifying news release in 1984. Here is the poem, called "Emigrantes-Death Train at Sarita Trestle, 1984."

Night falls
On a long walk north
For trespassers on
Private ranch land
Between U.S. Border Patrol
Checkpoints on Texas
Highway 77 and Texas
Highway 281

Immigrants
Smuggled across a river
Set to cast their fate
Into an American dream
That sends them walking
Along a southern border
Cargo line single file
Between the weathered
Rails and ties where
Poison fangs of brushland
Rattlesnakes do not
Render men defenseless
Against dark moon
Shadows of the night

Ever mindful
Dreams and dangers
Lurking in the
Brushland dark
The human line moves on

Until a train is near
Until the rumble pushes
Them along a railroad
Trestle high above a
Wide flat stretch
Of Baffin Bay

Bridge becomes a nightmare
Stretching on and on as
Panic whips the rites of
Torture cross their backs
Whistle wailing, spotlight
Glaring, humble strangers
Screaming, running, tripping
Jumping through the night
To broken arms and legs
While those who dream
They can outrun their
Lives are overtaken
Long before the
Train can stop

— Rosa Canales Pérez, June 2003

Here is the song, entitled "Las Llogas – Trail of the Undocumented."

In the Wild Horse Texas Desert
Starting at the Rio Grande
Trails are marked with jugs of water
Lying empty in the sand

Van cayendo las llogas de agua
Con historias sin contra
De una larga caminata
Para el norte a trabajar

CORO:

Por el monte hasta Falfurrias
Del Encino y Raymondville
De Zapata hasta Randado
Con destino a Hebbronville

Amenaza la sonaja
De un maldito cascabel
Y los vientos cargan lumbre
De la tumba de la sed

They listen for the rattle
Of the deadly cascabel
Heat waves shimmer in the distance
To a silent beat from hell

CORO se repite

A la sombra de un mesquite
De un huisache o de un nopal
Las historias de las llogas caen
Entre el denso chaparral

— Rosa Canales Pérez, March 2001

Several short tales and stories have come from other students and colleagues. Joe M. Flores heard this tale of "The Old Horny Toad" in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, in 1969. Note his colorful term for "dried up".

> It has been said that if you come across a dead horny toad, be it fresh or crispy, that if you pick it up and turn it upside down, it will rain.

He noted that it must be found right side up.

Dr. Alfred Richardson, a lifelong Brownsville resident, said that, in about 1927, his cousin told him that if you cut a snake in half, you have to put salt on both cut ends, otherwise the two pieces

will join and grow back together again. Dr. Genaro Lopez reports that his mother, Carmen Coronado López, heard a legend from the interior of Mexico that has led her to kill any lizards which enter her home with Raid insect spray or with a knife. The very old idea is that lizards can enter the vagina, lay eggs, and create a pregnancy resulting in a malformed baby. In 1962, while Dr. Genaro Lopez was an eighth-grade student, he went with his teacher in a Volkswagon Van to the clay dunes (*lomas*) east of Brownsville. There they saw and a caught a large rattlesnake. They released it, and watched it slither into a hole. In a few moments his appreciation of nature and conservation ethic were enhanced, and they have lasted his lifetime.

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Morality and Gender in Reynosa in the 1920s and 1930s

by

Sonia Hernández

The literature on the borderland town of Reynosa, Tamaulipas, across from the Texas cities of McAllen and Hidalgo, focuses on the city's development, local politics, role in the *maquiladora* industry, and on a handful of 'accomplished and honorable' men and women. In those studies where women are mentioned, only those who directed schools, married men with important military or political careers, or came from recognized families, made the historical 'published' record. Working class women or *obreras* and *campesinas*, women who "performed work appropriate to their sex," and businesswomen who operated prostitution houses were hardly mentioned, if at all. My work in the Mexican borderlands, principally Tamaulipas and Nuevo León, led me to zero in on Reynosa, a border town with a lot of history, but according to the secondary sources, no real participation from certain kinds of women. What is proposed in this essay is that the development of Reynosa, particularly in the post-Mexican revolutionary period, was guided and shaped by a discourse of gendered ideas of expectations for women and men. Women's participation in labor, education, the home, and a variety of public spaces constituted an integral part of the city's development.

Perusing a variety of documents in the *Archivo Histórico de Reynosa: sección época actual* (1900-1940), I discovered newspaper articles, statistical data, and other municipal documents. Perhaps the most valuable documents, however, were petitions and cases of *quejas* or formal complaints presented by Reynosa inhabitants, a good number of them women. These cases are rich not only because they tell us who sued whom or why people were complaining about certain things. They are also archival treasures because indirectly

or directly, they involve the gendered ideas of appropriate behavior for men and women and how individuals were shaped by these ideas and influenced their actions. Hence, the idea and practice of gender is emphasized as a "category of analysis."[1] Just as scholars from Mexico (and Latin America), the United States, and France have argued, the use of gender as an investigative lens provides us with a reference point to uncover not only "the unequal relationship between men and women" but to recover the history of women.[2] More importantly, as this essay will demonstrate, the social relations of the everyday helps us understand the way in which gender shaped people's responses to change and people's decision to act in a certain way.[3] While preliminary, the research presented in this essay seeks to address the gap between the local and the national and to bring out the transnational.

Since its founding in 1749, Reynosa has undergone social, political, and economic transformations as it shed its identity as New Spain's frontier settlement and became first a Mexican port of entry/exit, then a booming border city with the implementation of the Border Industrialization Program (BIP) in the 1960s, and presently a city plagued with drug-turf-related wars. In all of its phases, Reynosa has been a site of cultural socio-economic and political exchange. The historiography of the US-Mexican borderlands and of Reynosa in particular has grown in the last three decades; however, the majority of these studies have omitted the history of women and gender relations.[4]

Women's presence in the public sphere in paid work outside of the home at the turn of the twentieth century had been explained and justified as an "economic necessity" in step with official state norms. The *"ámbito familiar"* or familial sphere was considered a woman's place and it was here that the ideas of abnegation, virtue, and domesticity reigned. The presence of women in public areas including clothing *puestos* or *molinos de nixtamal* as workers or *obreras* posed serious contradictions in the expected behavior of women. It was the poor female worker who complicated the set of ideas regarding women's appropriate behavior by blurring the

line between the public and the private working out of economic necessity, as she had always done. Justifying her position as a working woman, *pobre pero honrada*, poor but honorable, the fact that a woman kept her feminine qualities, in the eyes of society, made her a good citizen.[5] In Mexico's far northeastern borderlands, comprised of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and Coahuila, labor shortages and the pressure from American and Mexican capitalists to industrialize and modernize the region after the 1910 revolution, forced society to accept women as workers, outside of their private domain, with the condition that she not abandon her feminine identity.[6]

The pressures of reconstruction felt from central Mexico and changes in American society meshed and shaped developments in Reynosa and the greater Mexican borderlands after 1920. The Mexican state's intent on promoting "the great Mexican family" as well as the maturation of the nation-state became apparent in the country's so-called periphery.[7] As the leaders of the post-revolutionary state dictated law, a discourse that involved the unification of the great family and a unified nation provided the basis for the continuation of modernization and industrialization. As the national project to reconstruct Mexico continued along the border, the process of national reconstruction coincided with the 'roaring twenties' of its northern neighbor.

The decades after the revolution were plagued with social and economic problems. The decline in the production of goods such as sugar, corn, and cereals created social problems in the border and throughout the country.[8] Developments on the north bank of the Rio Grande would temporarily alleviate the problems associated with economic and political instability. The progressive and reformist spirit in the United States prompted a prohibition law that was later amended to the constitution (and later repealed). Reynosa, just as other Mexican border towns, became a site outside the boundaries of strict moral behavior and emerging anti-alcoholic campaigns in northern Mexico where transnational residents and transients could visit bars and prostitution houses.[9]

In upper class circles, Reynosa women and men formed "ligas anti-alcólicas" and promoted a "dry" Mexican family. However, just as in other border cities including Matamoros and Ciudad Juárez, Reynosa became a site of illicit activity, red-zones, or zones of tolerance.[10] While seen as spaces of immorality (legalized) and often of grave danger, due to brawls over prostitutes, border residents, particularly Americans, perceived these zones as a place for recreation -- an exciting and vibrant place to visit. Zones of tolerance were both "vital and conspicuous elements in the border cityscape, a reflection of the importance of prostitution and adult entertainment in the local economies."[11] These were not only attractive to the clients themselves, but to individuals looking to make a good profit. Just as local and international businessmen took advantage of the opportunities to establish prostitution houses, so did women. As the region witnessed growth via the irrigation projects and commercial activity spurred by *Petróleos Mexicanos*, a handful of women took advantage of the economic possibilities sparked by the illicit environment in these border zones.[12]

In fact, life in post-revolutionary Reynosa was colored by the developments in the north; that is, an economic surge due to its position to offer Americans the pleasures of life that had been prohibited, particularly alcohol and women, strengthened the local economy. While a segment of the female population in Reynosa "performed labor[s] appropriate to their sex," referring to domestic work (paid and unpaid), others found employment in night-life related industries. While women voluntarily took up these kinds of jobs there was also the problem of *tratantes de blancas*, women who were brought to the border region from different parts of Mexico promised to be taken to the United States although instead sold to individuals who forced them to work in nearby prostitution houses.[13] By the 1940s and 1950s, despite the sexual division of labor and unequal wages, more than 25,000 women were registered as economically active.[14]

Petitions and cases related to family conflicts found in the municipal archive provide a lens into the private lives of women

and how these "moral violations" and breaking of traditions and laws that "glued" a "virtuous" Reynosa together point to a different historical narrative; one that has been ignored by those who write of Reynosa women as uni-dimensional, and mention only those who were considered "honorable," and "virtuous ladies of good society."[15]

The case of Lucía Puentes of Reynosa illustrates this point. In early November 1925, Lucía submitted a petition to municipal authorities asking for permission to establish a prostitution house on Calle Terán in Reynosa's "zone of tolerance." On the "margins of the city's eastern limits," Lucía's business would provide services to local and international men who could solicit prostitutes "under her charge."[16] Conscious of the laws that structured Reynosa society with regard to prostitution houses, Lucía pledged to register "her prostitutes" after they "they passed health inspections," and she pledged that she would report "all money generated on a monthly basis from each and every woman." Lucía asked for a liquor license and agreed to "pay all corresponding taxes."[17] While we do not know the number of women who established businesses of this nature, we do know that women took advantage of the economic opportunities available along the border. While the historiography of the border with regard to the establishment of bars, prostitution houses, and the creation of "tolerance zones," emphasizes the economic impact of these industries on the region, women's participation in this activity as business entrepreneurs and their activity in a socio-economic context has not been addressed. Lucía's case, just as the other cases found in the Reynosa archives, is representative of women who took part in the socio-economic development of a city that even today is known for its night life. Hence, the various petitions for the establishment of these businesses points to women's important role as shapers of their own society.[18] They continued taking part in the development of this border town as entrepreneurs in *locales* such as "El Faro" and "Salón París" shaping the very essence of a border town that offered an exciting night life, alcohol, and access to women.[19]

Notwithstanding these economic opportunities, there existed certain rules that limited the physical and social mobility of women who desired to establish and manage these kinds of businesses or who practiced prostitution. For those who engaged in clandestine prostitution, such as the Reynosense Tomasa Cantú, mobility was highly constrained. When neighbors reported Tomasa's illegal and "immoral" behavior to authorities, she was ordered to appear in the municipal offices, warned about her "bad behavior," and was accused of practicing "clandestine prostitution." The mayor, Jesús Tarrega, through a written statement informed Tomasa that if "such acts were to be repeated" she would be "sent to the zone of tolerance" and her "children were to be picked up by city authorities."[20] Women who provided sexual services for a fee outside of the designated zone were to be punished. Certainly, these socio-economic restrictions were implemented to function as a mechanism of social control. The mixing of *vecinos* considered of "good reputation" or of the reputable class with "public" women, at the disposition of men in accepted zones, was considered anti-social.

That the state and its representatives dictated such socio-economic rules did not imply that the laws that existed in Reynosa were implemented and carried out by the state; these developed and functioned because the men and women of Reynosa promoted and/or rejected them based on their ideas of 'appropriate' behavior for men and women. It was the residents' responses to such decrees and their symbolic value that shaped the development and implementation of these types of social laws. Research demonstrates how the inhabitants of the city facilitated the implementation or rejection of certain laws, particularly those dealing with social control. The case of eighteen "heads of household" from Reynosa, of which two were women, who petitioned municipal authorities reveals how residents themselves shaped not only the laws but everyday life. In the spring of 1927, at the offices of the municipal authorities, the eighteen heads of household presented a formal complaint against a *vecino*.[21] It so happened that in one of the

neighbors' houses, one of several belonging to Manuel Garza Cárdenes, a woman, simply known as Don Bernabé Quintanilla's wife, was said to be occupying the house. The *vecinos* who presented their complaint, argued that the woman "had adopted a life that resembled that of a public woman," and this was the basis of their claim. The *vecinos* argued that "the neighborhood in which the woman's house was located, in all respects [was], one where honorable people live." That a "woman with such reputation who led a public life" lived in an "honorable" neighborhood was unacceptable. The "honorable" heads of household asked the city authorities to "force the more superior authorities to remove such a woman from the neighborhood." They asked that this be accomplished by "all and any means possible so that justice could be served."[22]

Not only did groups of *vecinos* help promote and sustain social control laws in Reynosa, but female educators, affluent women who belonged to the *magisterio* or the field of (public) education, took center stage in prescribing certain ideas about gender and honor. Accomplished women such as Beatriz Morales viuda de Rodríguez, often spoke of morality and proper behavior of all women, particularly those of the working classes. Morales's position as teacher and director of the all girls' school, Josefa Ortíz de Domínguez went beyond that of instruction and leadership in school grounds. She was considered a "reputable" and "honorable" member of Reynosense society. When Consuelo Cantú de Magallón, another Reynosa woman, accused Morales of sleeping with her husband, their case became part of the official record, where questions of morality, honor, and decorum took center stage and made a very private issue a public one.

In March of 1931, the director of the Josefa Ortíz de Domínguez School, Beatriz Morales, presented her complaint to the municipal authorities accusing Consuelo Cantú de Magallón of defamation of character. Consuelo had written a letter to Beatriz accusing her of sleeping with her husband. Beatriz, upholding her reputation as one of the city's educators (and respected widow) in a recognized

school, presented a formal complaint to the *ministerio público*. In her formal complaint, Morales introduced herself as a good *vecina* further explaining that her "social position is based on my behavior and my impeccable past." Morales's complaint followed:

> In the letter written by Mrs. Consuelo Cantú de Magallón, using violent and degrading language inappropriate for a woman of her position, she insults me, degrades me, and denigrates my reputation...and my daughters...given my position as a woman of good reputation and honest worker there is not the slightest reason for deserving this woman's degrading attacks...I am omitting the language used by this woman to denigrate me and allow you to read the attached letter...it will be clear that this grave issue requires the urgent attention of the authorities.[23]

Indeed, the letter sent to Beatriz contained strong language. Consuelo accused Beatriz of "being Nacho's lover."[24] Nacho was Consuelo's husband. She continued her accusations with the following words.

> You old drunk, I know that you are Nacho's lover. Prepare yourself for a beating...you shameless woman, who would have thought that a teacher would be sleeping with my husband. Is that what you teach your daughters and the girls at school? ... I know that you are my husband's lover because he confessed it ... you spend the time with my husband in front of your young daughters, you shameless woman. You better watch your back because I have paid someone to give you a beating if he sees you.[25]

Beatriz presented the letter as evidence and Reynosa authorities requested the presence of Consuelo to respond to the charges levelled against her. After Consuelo failed to attend the hearing

scheduled for late March, a second letter requesting her presence was delivered by police officer Rafael Guevara in April.[26]

Consuelo, according to the sworn testimony of a municipal doctor, Dr. Santiago Leal, was confined to bed rest because of stomach problems. Consuelo was pregnant and Dr. Leal recommended extended rest. Reynosa authorities notified Beatriz and suggested holding an *aveniencia* (sic), a conciliatory meeting, when Consuelo felt better. Beatriz agreed. She informed authorities that she would drop the charges only if Consuelo "legally detracted from the injurious claims made against her." Both women agreed to hold the meeting in early April at a mutual friend's home, Sr. Lauro E. Bolado, who knew both the Rodríguez and Magallón families.[27]

The words exchanged at the meeting reveal how ideas of gender and honor took center stage in Reynosa society and how they were articulated on an everyday basis. Beatriz reminded the attendees, which included a representative from the *municipio*, that the reason she had presented a formal complaint against Consuelo was because the adverse words "affected her reputation and dishonored her and made her vulnerable to society's contempt."[28] While the historical record does not tell us why Consuelo agreed to detract the "injurious words," she gave a lengthy apology admitting that her letter had hurt Beatriz's reputation. The apology, according to authorities, repaired "her honor and fame that she enjoyed in this city as director of the all-girls school." Beatriz agreed and accepted.[29] Because "both parties attended the meeting and agreed," the case was closed. Nacho's actions were never questioned in the official record.[30]

The cases presented in this preliminary essay, although not intended to provide a complete historical picture of Reynosa nor of ideas of morality, provide a window into the lives of women in the city of Reynosa in the post-revolutionary period. Equally important is the way in which the archival record, principally through civil cases and petitions, showcases the dominant role of gendered ideas that guided residents' actions. Both men and women helped

maintain a rigid understanding of appropriate behavior in their respective communities. However, it is clear that this rigidity was often interrupted or bypassed provoking reactions from residents themselves.

Indeed, the historical processes that unfolded along the border were imbued with a gendered discourse where ideas of social control, morality, and economic opportunity meshed and clashed. Women were part of this process and their responses and actions demonstrate their role as active agents and shapers of their own circumstances. Border society, at least as it developed in Reynosa, did not move forward according to the dictates of law from the center. Its position as a point of cultural and socio-economic interchange between two diverse nations led to the development of a different historical trajectory. Border residents, influenced by developments on both sides of the border, through their constant response and dialogue with what represented 'the state,' forged lives and shaped the very essence of border life.[31] A space of cultural encounter, Reynosa provides a reference point to study how gender is articulated in a bi-cultural, transnational zone of constant interaction. Events in Reynosa did not transform men and women; the gendered discourse promoted to structure society by residents themselves and the everyday forms of dialogue between the residents transformed and shaped their very essence. Unlike monographs that focus on glorifying the city and the *"grandes hombres"* or *"damas de sociedad,"* what we find after preliminary research in the city's municipal archives, is a different story. Women who were considered "immoral" and not "honorable" members of society also shaped the history of a border town that would become, despite rigid societal control, a vibrant, fast-paced city. In short, the constant gendered cultural dialogue that formed the basis of social relations is what shaped the trajectory of a city that today is dotted with multi-million *maquiladoras*, a growing migrant and transient population, and continues to be a major crossing point in the U.S.-Mexican borderlands.

Endnotes

1 See Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" *American Historical Review* vol.91 no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-1075.

2 María Teresa Fernández Aceves, Carmen Ramos Escandón, Susie Porter, "Los debates en torno a la historia de mujeres y la historia de género," in María Teresa Fernández Aceves, Carmen Ramos Escandón, Susie Porter, coordinadoras, *Orden Social e identidad de género México, siglos XIX y XX* (Guadalajara: CIESAS, 2006), 12; Elizabeth Maier, "Aplicaciones y limitaciones de la categoría de género," *Frontera Norte: Estudios ambientales, culturales de población, de administración pública, economicos sociales*, vol. 10 num. 20 (1998) julio-diciembre, 39-52.

3 A new approach to the study of Mexican and Latin American history is the concept of "lo cotidiano" or the everyday: see Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, Anne Staples, coord., *Historia de la Vida Cotidiana en México, Vol. IV Bienes y vivencias el siglo XIX* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005). See also their other volume as well as Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

4 Exceptions include Omar Valerio-Jimenez's doctoral dissertation, "Indios Bárbaros, Divorcées, and Flocks of Vampires: Identity and Nation on the Rio Grande, 1749-1894," UCLA, 2001. There is still no published in-depth monograph on women from Reynosa or gender during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the modern period see (twenty-first century) Kristen Petros, who works on women migrants from Veracruz to Reynosa, "Women on the Border: Gender, Migration, and the Making of Reynosa, Veracruz, Mexico," XXVII ILASSA Student Conference Research Paper, The University of Texas at Austin, 01 February 2007.

5 Carmen Ramos Escandón, "Señoritas Porfirianas: Mujer e Idelogía en el México Progresista, 1880-1910," in Carmen Ramos Escandón, coord., *Presencia y transparencia: la mujer en la historia de México* (México: El Colegio de México, 1987, 2a edición, 2006), 155-7.

6 Ibid. 161; Eduardo Alarcón Cantú, *Estructura Urbana en Ciudades Fronterizas: Nuevo Laredo-Laredo, Reynosa-McAllen, Matamoros-Brownsville* (Baja California: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2000), 77; see also Dawn Keremitsis for a discussion of labor patterns in the textile industry and women in the northern Mexican states, "Latin American Women Workers in Transition: Sexual Division of the Labor Force in Mexico and Colombia in the Textile Industry" *The Americas*, vol.40, no.4 (April 1984): 491-504.

7 Frank Brandenburg *The Making of Modern Mexico* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1964).

8 Marcial E. Ocasio Meléndez, *Capitalism and Development: Tampico, Mexico, 1876-1924* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); Javier Rojas Sandoval, *Monterrey: Poder Político, Obreros,*

y Empresarios en la Coyuntura Revolucionaria (Monterrey: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 1992), 35.

9 See the many documents related to the anti-alcoholic campaigns in northern Mexico, a movement with a significant female presence, found in the Archivo Particular de Emilio Portes Gil, Archivo General de la Nación.

10 Cirila Quintero Ramírez, "La organización laboral en la frontera este de México y Estados Unidos (1900-1940), in Ceballos Ramírez, *Encuentro en la Frontera*, 375.

11 James R. Curtis and Daniel D. Arreola, "Zonas de Tolerancia on the Northern Mexican Border," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 81, no.3 (July 1991), 333; also see Oscar J. Martínez, "El Paso y Ciudad Juárez," in Ceballos Ramírez, *Encuentro en la Frontera*, 223-225; for a discussion of prostitution in Latin America see Donna J. Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and the Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

12 Cantú, 88; Several United States border cities drew up zones of tolerance after the 1918 anti-prostitution laws; El Paso, Texas was among those cities, see Ann Gabbert, "Prostitution and Moral Reform in the Borderlands: El Paso, 1890-1920," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 12, no. 4 (Oct., 2003), 576-577.

13 Reynaldo López Olivares, *Reynosa en los 50s* (Reynosa: Impresora y Editora "Valdez y Estrada," 2001), 82; Gabbert, 604.

14 See the various documents where women appear as the petitioners, accused, or eyewitnesses in cases involving adultery, rape, abductions, marriage, and divorce. The phrase "labors appropriate to my (or their) sex" refers to women who identified themselves as domestic workers (whether paid or not) when asked to state their occupation in Legajo: Juzgado Civil, Asunto: varios, Legajo: Juzgado penal, Asunto: Pudor, Adulterio, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR; The phrase also "relied on a supposedly natural and therefore immutable division of labor by sex," as Elizabeth Quay Hutchison states. See *Labors Appropriate to their Sex: Gender, Labor, and the Politics of Urban Chile, 1900-1950* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 13; Lorey, 76. Table S700, This figure does not represent the total number of economically active people (eap) given that women workers in the informal sector such as washers, street vendors, etc., were not included. These numbers are for the entire state of Tamaulipas.

15 See the few texts on Reynosa women. Most deal with middle and upper class women. The literature on women in the state of Tamaulipas as a whole is no different.

16 Lucia Puentes to Presidente del Ayuntamiento (Reynosa) November 3, 1925, Asunto: Prostitución, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR; Reynosa's zona de tolerancia was between Colón and Terán streets extending up to the railroad tracks (near the present-day central bus station). This zone, part of the *barrio* "El Vapor" remained until 1949; it was relocated to the *colonia* "Aquiles Serdán," López Olivares, 81. Today Reynosa is popular for its "Boys' Town" and according to a recent report, prostitutes argue that most of their clients are "men from the Valley." The zone is still defined as a "necessary evil." Anabel Marquez, "Border Prostitution," February 12, 2007, KGBT 4, accessed web page: http://www.team4news.com/ Global/story.asp?S=6077614

17 Ibid. For Matamoros, see Andrés F. Cuellar, "Las Mujeres y la Vida Nocturna de Matamoros," unpublished article, 2000. I thank Mr. Cuellar for giving me a copy of this article.

18 Another Reynosense owner of a bar and prostitution house was Elena Lozano. To Reynosa presidente municipal from governor of Tamaulipas, 11 de septiembre, 1929, Asunto: Bares y Cantinas, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

19 "Anotaciones hechas por Comandante de la Policía, Reynosa," referente a las mujeres que ejercen la prostitución, Junio 7, 1933, to Presidente Municipal, Asunto: Prostitución, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR. The report stated that 34 women had been properly inspected for health problems. It was signed by Dr. Amadeo González Treviño; to Presidente Municipal from Dr. Santiago Leal, 8 de diciembre, 1931, Asunto: Prostitución, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

20 Tomasa Cantú from Jesús Tarrega, Presidente Municipal, c.1920, Asunto: Prostitución, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

21 To delegado municipal de Reynosa from vecinos, c.1930, José María Garza Zamora, Florentino Zamora, Gertrudis González, et al., Asunto: Prostitución, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

22 Ibid.

23 To agente de ministerio público from Beatriz Morales viuda de Rodríguez, March 9, 1931, Legajo: Juzgado Civil, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

24 To Beatriz Morales viuda de Rodríguez from Consuelo Cantú de Magallón, March 1931, Legajo: Juzgado Civil, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

25 Ibid; To Agente de Ministerio Público, Matamoros from Manuel A. de la Viña, Agente de Ministerio Público, Reynosa, March 11, 1931, Legajo: Juzgado Civil, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

26 To Beatriz Morales Viuda de Rodríguez from Daniel López, Agente de Ministerio Público de Reynosa, March 25, 1931, Legajo: Juzgado Civil, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR; Cédula Citatoria for Consuelo Cantú de Magallón from Daniel López, Agente de Ministerio Público de Reynosa, April 6, 1931, Legajo: Juzgado Civil, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

27 Ibid.

28 Report on *aveniencia* and agreement between parties, April 15, 1931, Legajo: Juzgado Civil, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

29 Ibid.

30 The *aveniencia* was permitted under Article 284 of the Código de Procedimientos Penales, Dictamen, April 18, 1931, Legajo: Juzgado Civil, Fondo: Epoca Actual, AHR.

31 Following the lead of a handful of scholars who have constructed a new borderlands history based on novel approaches including analysis of the intersections of race, ethnicity, nationalism, gender, and sexuality, this essay places women and gender at

the forefront of a borderlands narrative as it offers a new interpretation of the history of Reynosa—one that moves past a simple recollection of past events, chronologies or history *a la cronista*, a male-centered narrative, and the inclusion of only the "damas de sociedad." For approaches that combine gender, ethnicity, race, and class within a transnational framework see Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, ed. *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); see also the articles in Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, coord. *Encuentro en la Frontera: Mexicanos y Norteamericanos en Un Espacio Común*, (México: El Colegio de México, 2001).

Short Stories and Sound Bites from the UTB Hunter Room's Brownsville Chamber of Commerce Files

by

Robin Robinson

The Brownsville Chamber of Commerce Files, located at the University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College Hunter Room, contain over thirty boxes of original source material covering a myriad of topics of the sort one would expect for any chamber of commerce papers. While this collection offers information of interest to the scholarly researchers, to graduate students seeking a thesis topic, and to common citizens interested in local history, the lack of an index limits accessibility. I recently spent one week combing these boxes file by file. While this essay hardly acts as a user's guide, it may provide enough of a general overview to assist a researcher in determining if a particular topic is included within its folders. In some cases, I found enough information to generate a "short story" – in others cases, a "sound bite." When useful, I mention the box where a particular item is located.

I did not sit down before this material with the intent of learning its entire content. However, while I quickly realized that the subject and period that I sought--Winter Texans in the 1920s--was not going to be present in any quantity, these papers did cover the type of business, tourism, commercial relations with Mexico, and Valley development topics that interest me. While the information within these boxes extends beyond these subjects, this is what I noted with the intent of returning for future research. While the bulk of the period covered treats the middle to late 1950s, dates reach as far back as the 1930s and as far forward as the mid-1960s. There is limited chronological order to this assembly, and material pertaining to a single subject is often scattered throughout the collection.

Tourism and the LRGVPB

Having researched and written about tourism in Brownsville and the Lower Rio Grande Valley, particularly in the 1920s, I concluded that Valley businessmen and residents had little inclination to seek tourists or provide for their needs. While much talk circulated about the potential value of tourism, everyone was focusing on land and agriculture as the region's economic future. Material in the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce Files reveals that attitudes changed little; a lot of talk and no action remained the norm until after World War II and formation of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Planning Board (LRGVPB).

Weslaco made the first serious move to advertise nationally for tourists. While other communities joined in the effort, Harlingen, Brownsville, and San Benito failed to participate. Whereas talk of forming a unified Valley chamber of commerce had been going on since the 1920s, such an organization materialized only in 1944, as the LRGVPB, based in Weslaco. Still lacking enthusiastic commitment from its various communities, the LRGVPB had difficulty gathering enough members to draw up a constitution, and struggled to collect the obligatory membership dues. The major reason for forming this inclusive organization was to combine publicity resources, as national ad campaigns proved too expensive for a single town. Complaints voiced at meetings looked identical to those raised in the 1920s. Members noted that Valley residents demonstrated an indifference and smugness towards tourism, that people in the North did not know the Valley's location, and that Texas, unlike California, refused to devote any resources toward promoting tourism. With much debate, the LRGVPB settled on a speaker's bureau, a regional newspaper, and a national ad campaign that was rated "conservative yet adequate."

Ads and articles appeared in Midwestern newspapers and magazines, including *Field and Stream*, *Life*, *Farm and Ranch*, *Flying* (an air tour magazine), *Colliers*, *Esquire*, *The South Texan*, and *Super Market Merchandising*. Unfortunately, tourism continued to take

a backseat to land and agriculture in these promotions, and the Valley still lacked needed recreation hotels and tourist camps. Weslaco resorted to publicizing itself with a thirty-two page tourist booklet.

The publicizing and accommodating of tourists muddled along until the mid 1950s. By then, Brownsville possessed a Winter Residents Club and its first public golf course, while Matamoros provided "tourist police." In 1955, the Hotel-Motel Association of the RGV claimed to offer 54 hotels and 123 motels. The Brownsville Chamber of Commerce participated in numerous tourist clubs and organizations, and took seriously its advertising committee. South Padre Island drove the interest in tourism, as it quickly became "the Riviera of the Southwest" and Texas' number one visitor's destination with the completion of the Queen Isabella Causeway in 1954. Keeping to script, however, complaints still surfaced in the 1960s that Brownsville continued to neglect the tourist trade.

Mexico did not play second fiddle when it came to tourism. It not only played as an equal partner with the Valley, but also often took the initiative or acted independently when Texans dragged their feet. Tampico actively sought Americans with an annual "Tarpon Rodeo" fishing tournament. Brochures, ads, invitations, registration forms, and inquiries represent some of the information found for this event in the early 1930s. Radio spots and newspaper ads from the 1930s are also present for other Mexico destinations. Most of the material dates from the late 1950s and early 1960s. Matamoros printed, in English, tourist brochures, notices about bullfights, nightclubs, and special occasion waivers of bridge crossing fees. Matamoros created an *agencia de turismo*, a fishing club, and tourist police to watch over visitors and expedite tour busses across the border, and obtained membersh p in the Pan-American Tourist Bureau. The early 1960s saw the Brownsville and Matamoros organizations sharing numerous events, including chamber of commerce conventions in Tampico, Monterrey, and San Antonio. Local events included a Matamoros tourism banquet, a Texas-Mexico holiday council meeting, and a Matamoros

and Brownsville merchants BBQ. Mexico's International Good Neighbor Council, based in Monterrey, invited the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce to join its tourist-promoting group. This organization's monthly bulletins from 1961 to 1965 reveal northern Mexico's interest in American tourists.

Historians like to tell stories with numbers, but, unfortunately, I found few relating to tourism. Some of the useful data uncovered include an unscientifically determined total of Winter Texans and their home states for the years 1954, 1955, and 1960. It is interesting that, while the numbers change, the percent and ranking provided by each state appears to remain the same from the 1920s straight through to today. An airport survey of passengers conducted in 1963 gives their origin, destination, and purpose of travel. Bridge-crossing numbers from Brownsville to Matamoros, while not scientifically derived, exist for 1930 (with estimated dollars spent by Americans in Matamoros), 1935, and 1952. A useful extensive list exists for Laredo from 1929 to 1942.

Fiestas and Celebrations

Charro Days is an annual four-day celebration held in Brownsville in cooperation with Matamoros. The Brownsville Chamber of Commerce created the fiesta in 1937 (during the Great Depression's economic slump) to recognize Mexican culture and attract tourists. Since the earliest Charro Days fiesta, the celebrations have included parades, complete with floats, as well as street dances, a rodeo, mariachi and marimba concerts, and *ballet folklórico* performances by school students. A variety of material about Charro Days is scattered throughout the collection, with one discussion found in Box 18 about a crew from New York seeking to film the 1951 celebration.[1]

A very popular annual celebration that has not survived was the Cotton Carnival and Cotton Queen Beauty Contest established in 1956. Information about this event includes membership and officer lists, photos, tickets, programs, beauty contest judging ballots, contestant profiles, memos, budgets, flyers, and newspaper

clippings. Like Charro Days and other celebrations, arrangements allowed for the waiving of bridge crossing fees and visas. Noticeable is the lack of Spanish surnames amongst the organizers, sponsors, and beauty contestants. Once again, this subject is also scattered throughout the collection.

Organizing and financing annual Christmas celebrations in Brownsville fell to the Merchants Association. Along with the Christmas Fiesta Parade, the association designed, purchased, and installed the street decorations. Remarkable is the amount of manufacturer's catalogs, price lists, installation instructions, installation contractors, and sample decorations kept by the Chamber of Commerce. I am not sure of the historical value of this matter, but all of the tinsel brings back memories of a typical 1950s midsized-town main street Christmas.

Most interesting is the material relating to celebrations hosted by Matamoros. From its origin, Armistice Day featured a bullfight in Matamoros. While bullfights later lost the popularity they had enjoyed in the 1920s, the event continued from time to time on this holiday. A sampling of bullfight flyers and announcements exists for the 1930s and 1940s. Armistice Day evolved into Pan-American day in Matamoros, producing tourist promotion guides of which this collection offers examples from 1944 through 1949 and from 1955. Mexican patriotic holidays, including *Cinco de Mayo*, the *Día de la Bandera*, and the *Diez y Seis de Septiembre* Mexican Independence Day, seem to have been handled by *La Junta Patriótica*, whose programs exist for most of the 1930s and 1940s, stored in Oversized Box 1.

Matamoros did not neglect to commemorate its unique relationship with its twin city across the line. The Goodwill Council annually hosted the Good Humor Fiesta in the 1930s, including floats from Brownsville crossing the bridge. This event seems to have merged into Pan-American day and the *Fiestas de Carnival* that functioned in the 1940s and 1950s. The Brownsville Chamber of Commerce's International Relations Committee and Good Neighbor Council

acted to coordinate shared celebrations for Brownsville in the 1950s. Also, a bi-city organization, the Texas-Mexican Holiday Council, formed in the early 1960s to benefit both cities' tourism effort, including hosting a convention in 1962 featuring outside tourist industry professionals presenting lectures and workshops.

Relations with the Federal Government

Brownsville, Matamoros, and the respective federal governments did not always see eye-to-eye. Many examples exist in this collection of the Chamber of Commerce dealing with border crossing and customs issues. One interesting incident was the 1943 campaign by the Chamber of Commerce to remove A.E. Kraut from his post as Brownsville Deputy Collector of Customs.

It appears that Mr. Kraut had angered Brownsville and Matamoros city officials and businessmen by, in their opinion, adhering too strictly to wartime border procedures that unduly delayed the normal operating practices at this border location. When Kraut behaved unresponsively, even antagonistically, to complaints, both cities waged a public and private campaign to oust the customs collector from his position. Letters and telegrams to congressional representatives and condemnation by the *Brownsville Herald* brought pressure on the uncooperative federal agent. The Chamber's Port of Entry Committee sent to Washington a file titled "Specific Charges by the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, Brownsville, Texas in Support of its Request for Transfer of A.E. Kraut." This fifty-six page document included the affidavits of prominent citizens detailing twenty-four "incidents" that justified removal. Kraut subsequently resigned in January 1944.

Two issues provide interesting correspondences between Brownsville and Washington in the 1950s -- air transportation and Mexican labor. Brownsville campaigned to keep and expand air service in stiff competition with Harlingen, providing to the Civil Aeronautics Board numerous letters, telegrams, and reports to support the encouragement of commercial air traffic to the city

in 1952. The struggle continued into the 1960s, and this collection provides details of a 1963 Civil Aeronautics Board Hearing.

The *Bracero* Labor Program represented an important issue, especially during cotton harvesting. Needs and positions are given in a 1950-1951 forty-page survey titled "Labor Requirements and Labor Resources, Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas." Valleyites communicated directly with Senators Lloyd Bentsen and Lyndon B. Johnson, and even President Harry Truman, while Washington fashioned bills allowing special exemption for Mexican labor in Texas and "Importation of Foreign Agricultural Workers."

Matamoros-Victoria Highway

The need for a quality hard-surface road linking Brownsville and Matamoros to the interior of Mexico long received emphasis as an important factor in improving and expanding the economic success of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Brownsville and Matamoros cooperated in an attempt to displace Laredo as the most important business border crossing. Within the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce Files, one finds the changing and evolving efforts and strategies for gaining this thoroughfare, from its planning in 1930 to completion in 1948.

Tourists inquiring about road routes and conditions into Mexico in the 1930s routinely received advice that crossing at Laredo was the only practical method. Vacationers were discouraged from trying to travel into Mexico via Brownsville/Matamoros. Matamoros was the first to seek support for an all-weather hard-surface road to Victoria in 1931, and "rumors" circulated the next year that Mexico City was prepared to build the highway. When these rumors proved false, Brownsville in 1933 began exploring ways to fund the "Matamoros Road from north of the border."

While support for the project ebbed and surged, the Chamber of Commerce eventually formed an enduring "Matamoros-Victoria Road Committee" that left behind much correspondence and meeting records. This committee became particularly active

in the early 1940s, when completion of the road slowed as it neared Matamoros. The Chamber of Commerce sought private contributions, sources for needed construction material, and government support, in an attempt to expedite completion. A thorough mile-by-mile survey described road conditions and building activities in 1944, and a "goodwill trip" to Victoria promoted the accessibility of the advancing project. One major obstacle was the delayed completion of the "Corona Bridge." The Chamber, with assistance of Mexican General "Maximinto" Ávila Camacho, sought American steel to build the crossing.

The Brownsville Chamber of Commerce did not concern itself only with roads in Mexico; its Gulf Coast Highway Association (1941-52) competed furiously for roadways to the Valley. Of particular interest is the "Wetzel Incident." In 1945, a heated public and private exchange occurred between the Honorable John H. Hunter, Brownsville, and Nat Wetzel, a Harlingen *Valley Morning Star* newspaperman, who, in an article, denigrated Brownsville as "just a flag station" of a town. Various Valley chambers of commerce lined up in attempt to censure Wetzel and to mitigate his negative impact on their efforts to promote and attract funding for a coastal highway connecting to the Matamoros-Victoria road.

When the road was nearly finished in 1948, it seemed that the project was not going to be completed. Radio promotions and announcements of opening ceremonies by the Chamber's Dedication Committee proved premature. After some last minute fundraising, an uninterrupted paved road stretched from Brownsville to Victoria became a reality. A 1948 survey of the roadway enabled the Chamber of Commerce to promote actively the auto tours to Mexico that Americans had sought since 1930.

Port of Brownsville and Intracoastal Canal

In 1808, the US Senate had considered the grand concept of a canal system that would eventually connect Boston with the mouth of the Rio Grande. By 1829, much of the route along the heavily populated eastern portion of the proposed intracoastal waterway

had been selected. By 1875, the army engineers submitted the first plan for a waterway from Louisiana to Brownsville, intended to reach the Brownsville Ship Channel in 1949.[2]

Needless to say, the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce involved itself closely with the development and use of this waterway. A substantial number of newspaper articles, personal letters, correspondence with state and federal officials, and organizational meetings, in particular by the Intracoastal Canal Association, are included in this collection. I did not look closely at the subjects, but there is a lot of material focused on the mid 1950s (with some items dated before its completion in 1949). Unfortunately, this subject is scattered throughout the entire collection. Two reports ("Comparative Statement of Cargo Movement Through Texas Coast Jetty Channels" and "Consolidated Statement of Tonnage Handled by Ports and Moving Through Gulf Intracoastal Waterway in US Army Engineer District, Galveston," US Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston, Texas, 14 August 1957) may be found in Oversized Box 1.

World War II Organizations and Fund Raisers

There is not a lot of material on the subject of World War II organizations and fund raisers, but what exists should be of interest to anyone investigating the Valley during this period. Local organizations represented in this collection include (but are not limited to) the War Fund, the Civil Production Administration, and the Board of Economic Warfare. Newspaper clippings, meeting minutes, bank statements, and financial records are found in this collection. Membership lists (personal and business) read like a who's who of Brownsville, and it is interesting to see which citizens ranked as "patriotic" and which required "encouragement." Also interesting is a detailed discussion about providing for the expected return of war veterans. While this material also requires a file-by-file search, it is concentrated in Box 4 and Box 5.

Oversized Boxes

I found the oversized boxes to contain the most interesting material of the collection. Posters, maps, announcements, and pamphlets run from annual celebrations to political advertisements ranging in dates from the early 1930s to 1962. Of particular interest are numerous posters from programs in Matamoros, including an inclusive run for *La Junta Patriótica* from 1935 to 1955. There are four photos of "Matamoros, Mexico 1909," including shots of the Plaza, Cathedral, and unidentified street scenes. A list of the contents of the oversized boxes exists, but I would not trust it to be totally accurate or all-inclusive. Someone may find of value a substantial amount of material concerning city Christmas decorations and displays, with the manufacturers' literature and installation instructions.

Chamber of Commerce and Junior Chamber of Commerce Scrapbooks

This is the best-organized part of the collection and is useful for an overview of major events that occurred in any given year. The oversized pages of the Junior Chamber of Commerce still have their original tabs indicating the subject of the collected newspaper articles. Politics, bond elections, celebrations, commercial and economic developments, transportation, border issues, relations with Mexico, the acquisition of Fort Brown by the city, Falcon Dam, and even a local "Red Scare" are sample topics assembled for the years 1948 through 1952. Unfortunately, the news clippings for the years 1954 through 1957 are detached from their scrapbook page, stuffed into legal sized file folders, and very roughly labeled by subject. A photo album is included, recording the meeting of Texas Jaycees at the 1956-57 state convention held in Brownsville.

Photos

Boxes 24 and 25 contain for photos of the 1930s. Box 24 includes photos of Brownsville, a railroad terminal, the Chamber of

Commerce building, Fort Brown, a citrus processing plant, the Port of Brownsville, a Matamoros rail bridge, and the Rio Grande River. Box 25 holds old aerial photos, photos of irrigation, beach photos (including the Del Mar Beach House), ocean tankers, and a sporting goods convention. Of particular interest are 1928 photos of Mexican landscapes and roads and "typical Mexican huts which are becoming deserted" in a village "near Brownsville." Box 12 offers 8 x 10 photos of an oil depot, beach scenes, the Jetty restaurant, and cotton fields.

Major Individual Reports, Surveys, Data, and Publications

Not surprisingly, the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce Files contain many documents that do not belong to a particular story or topic, but remain noteworthy on their own and may be useful for researchers. An incomplete sample of the items, listed chronologically, follows:

> Bridge crossing numbers from Brownsville to Matamoros for 1930 (with estimated dollars spent by Americans in Matamoros), 1935, and 1952. A useful extensive list exists for Laredo from 1929 to 1942
>
> 1934 Mexican Foreign Trade Status given by the Pan American Union in Washington, D. C., with a list of President Cardenas' cabinet members, 8 pages
>
> 1935 booklet of translated stump speeches of Mexican President Emilio Portes Gil
>
> 1937 commercial report of the Dominican Republic, 20 pages
>
> 1943 The Chamber's Port of Entry Committee sent to Washington a file titled "Specific Charges by the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, Brownsville,

Texas in Support of its Request for Transfer of A.E. Kraut," 56 pages

1944 report, Good Neighbor Policy of Texas, 21 pages

1944 Ciudad Victoria Development Brochure, 110 pages

1946 PRI Miguel Alemán Campaign "Program of Government" (PRI platform)

1949 Annual Financial Report, and City Revenue Bonds Report

1950-51 "Labor Requirement and Labor Resources, Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas," 40 page survey

1951 House of Representatives "Importation of Foreign Agricultural Workers"

1952 Exhibit before Federal Interstate Commerce commission seeking to extend/keep air service to Brownsville

1954/55 Voters List with "Race" classification

1955 Brownsville Fire Department Annual Report

1955 Brownsville sales tax information

1955 South Padre Island business lists of hotels and restaurants

1956 *Changing Times: the Kiplinger Magazine.* Article about opportunity in Texas

1957 "Comparative Statement of Cargo Movement Through Texas Coast Jetty Channels" and "Consolidated Statement of Tonnage Handled

by Ports and Moving Through Gulf Intracoastal Waterway in US Army Engineer District, Galveston," US Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston, Texas, 14 August 1957

1958 "Red Star Into the West" Soviet Aeroflot, by Air Transport Association of America, 30 pages

1962 demographics and census

1963 Hotel-Motel Association roster

1963 Civil Aeronautics Board Hearings

While this brief essay hardly reveals the full content of the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce File located at UT-B's Hunter Room, it does hint at the type of material researchers can find in its folders. Whether one seeks an original research topic or a single event that adds to a larger story, this collection offers a good source for discovering and explaining local history.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "CHARRO DAYS," http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/lkc2.html (accessed March 19, 2006).

2 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "GULF INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY," http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/rrg4.html (accessed March 17, 2006).

Sand, Sun, Set, and Match: The Story of Beach Volleyball on South Padre Island

by

Helmut Langerbein

"What is an island that prides itself on its beaches, water sports, sunny weather, and warm, subtropical climate without beach volleyball?" asks Mary Kaye of the South Padre Island Convention and Visitors Bureau. "It [beach volleyball] belongs to the island like vacation, spring break, or fishing."[1] Given the ideal weather conditions on the island and the increasing worldwide popularity of beach volleyball exemplified by the prime time television coverage of the Olympic competition and the tournaments of the Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP), as well as the emergence of sand volleyball courts and tournaments in states and countries as far away from any natural beach as Colorado and Tennessee, or even Austria and Switzerland, it is indeed surprising that beach volleyball has not taken hold as a major sport on South Padre Island beaches and in the Rio Grande Valley. Not even mentioned on the town's website on sports and recreation,[2] going vastly unnoticed by the local press,[3] and being considered an activity for Sunday afternoon family picnics rather than a serious sport, competitive two-on-two beach volleyball on South Padre Island is being played by a small group of enthusiasts and the occasional college or high school player trying "to get *her* feet wet"[4] in the sand. Currently there are only three annual tournaments attracting players from all over the state of Texas. With the hope of generating more interest in this fast-paced, exciting, and physically as well as mentally demanding sport, this author and avid beach volleyball player will trace in this article its development on South Padre Island.

A brief history of beach volleyball

According to some sources, beach volleyball has its roots in Hawaii, where, in 1915, members of the Outrigger Beach and Canoe Club at Waikiki Beach started playing volleyball in the sand when wave conditions where unsuitable for surfing or canoeing.[5] They played by practically the same rules and regulations as indoor volleyball, including the court size of eighteen feet by nine feet, and had six players on each team. In the 1920s, the new leisurely activity spread to the beaches of Santa Monica and Southern California where it became popular with surfers, college students, and families who often played three-on-three or four-on-four games, depending on how many people were available.

Other sources place the sport's origin directly in California,[6] where competitions appeared as early as 1924, when the Santa Monica Beach Club and the Santa Monica Swimming Club began playing against each other every Sunday from July 4 to Labor Day. It would take another six years of experimenting with the number of players on each team and court size until, in 1930, the first recorded two-on-two full-court game was played. This format remained unchanged until the late 1990s, when court size was reduced to sixteen feet by eight feet and antennas through which the ball has to be played were placed eight feet apart on top of the net.

In the 1930s, sand volleyball also appeared in France, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Latvia. In the United States, people looking for escape from the Great Depression played volleyball on the beach. By the 1940s and 1950s, regular tournaments had been organized and the sport had spread to Northern California, Florida, and Brazil. Women began to participate, first in mixed or co-ed competition, then in their own two-woman tournaments. In 1962, beach volleyball gained some sort of official recognition when President John F. Kennedy visited a tournament near Long Beach. Three years later, the California Beach Volleyball Association (C.B.V.A.) was founded to standardize rules and coordinate tournament schedules. The following two decades

then saw the involvement of major commercial sponsors, such as Winston Tobacco, Jose Cuervo Tequila, and the Miller Brewing Company; the formation of professional tours in the United States, Brazil, and Australia; and increased television coverage. In the early 1990s, the *Federation Internationale de Volleyball* (F.I.V.B.) established a world-wide professional tournament circuit, and, in 1996, beach volleyball became an Olympic sport. Beach volleyball is now officially played in more than ninety-five countries.[7]

Beach volleyball on South Padre Island

The origin of beach volleyball on South Padre Island cannot be exactly determined. Courts were available in front of several hotels in the 1970s, and certainly people must have played recreational games on the beach as they are described in the following passage.

> Along with hot dogs and cokes [or beers], a plastic ball is taken to the park or beach. Some kind of sagging net is strung up and as many people as will fit within the court boundaries begin to bat the ball across the net for a fun recreational game. In this version of volleyball, there are usually no rules in handling the ball, and skill is not a prerequisite. To tell them that they are not touching the ball correctly would ruin the game.[8]

More competitive forms of sand volleyball began in 1979 on a court next to Blackbeard's Restaurant. Local players such as Laura and Karen Terheggen, Jack and Danny Loff, Bart Shaw, Scott Gunn, and Roger Fletcher, among others, would meet on weekends and play six-person games in which at least a minimum of the ball-handling and other rules were observed. About two years later, when Blackbeard's razed its court to extend its parking lot, the games were moved to the available courts in front of the Radisson Hotel. By 1985, the first two-person matches were played. Local players made the transition to the two-person format because it was difficult to assemble twelve players regularly, and, even more

importantly, because they were inspired by telecasts and stories from California highlighting this demanding, exciting, and elegant "new" form of playing volleyball.[9]

In the spring of 1988, the expanding AVP tour staged one of its tournaments on South Padre Island, and built its courts and bleachers about three blocks north of the Radisson Hotel. While this nationally televised event offered an ideal springboard and opportunity to popularize the game and increase local interest, the island did not respond well. The tournament was so sparsely advertised that even local enthusiasts were surprised to see the "pros" play when they came out for their own weekend matches. As one can see in a photo published in *The Brownsville Herald*, there are only a few spectators sitting on the bleachers even during the final game. The tournament was won by the then dominating team of Sinjin Smith, who would later become instrumental in making beach volleyball an Olympic sport, and Randy Stoklos, the first million-dollar prize winner in beach volleyball. Yet, due to lack of public interest, official support, and perhaps its own financial demands, the AVP would not return, and beach volleyball would continue to play its marginal role on the island.[10]

It took another four years before local players with the backing of the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Radisson Hotel, and a few other local businesses formed South Padre Island Volleyball (S.P.I.V.B.), an association with the goals of promoting local competitive beach volleyball and organizing three annual tournaments to be held Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day weekends. Bart Shaw, a financial consultant, acted as its first tournament director. He began recruiting players from the Rio Grande Valley, Corpus Christi, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston by letters to volleyball clubs and by word-of-mouth. His tournaments gradually increased in size and quality of play. However, already in 1995, the Fourth of July tournament had to be dropped from the schedule because the Radisson Hotel believed that volleyball interfered with its other beachfront activities.

The year 1999 brought more important changes in the development of beach volleyball on South Padre Island. The sport almost died when the Radisson Hotel, too, withdrew its support for the remaining two tournaments, arguing that the beachfront courts used for the annual Memorial Day and Labor Day events would restrict beach access for its guests and that players would take away already limited parking spaces. Although the Radisson allowed the staging of the annual 1999 Memorial Day tournament for a last time, the event was cancelled at the last minute because the tournament director, Chris Roberts, simply did not appear that day. Obviously players who had made the journey from all over Texas in vain were frustrated and resolved not to come to South Padre Island any longer. Beach volleyball had reached a new low.

But the summer of 1999 fortunately also saw the arrival of a retired lumber yard owner and veteran beach volleyball player from Hawaii, Linzy Hotz. Like anyone who has been infected with "the bug" or "the fever,"[11] as long-time beach volleyball players call the almost drug-like addiction and commitment to the sport, the then sixty-year old Hotz could not stand by and watch the deterioration of the game he had played for decades. With the help of Laura Terheggen, Mary Kaye, and others, he resuscitated beach volleyball by finding a new venue in front of Boomerang Billy's Bar and Grill that allowed for the continuation of the traditional Labor Day tournaments. As expected, only fifteen teams participated in the first two-day event, but, in September 2004, when Hotz withdrew from his activities due to family obligations, travel plans, and health issues, once again more than forty teams were coming to the tournaments he ran so efficiently.

During his "tenure," Hotz implemented a more professional reorganization of beach volleyball on the island. As he admits, "I had the time and I love the game,"[12] so he approached the city to help with putting up, leveling, and maintaining courts. Depending on the wind and shifting sand dunes on the island, courts need to be leveled at least every three to four months. He also brought in local

sponsors such as restaurants and surf shops that would provide nets, banners, gift certificates, and other prizes. Hotz traveled to San Antonio, Austin, and Houston to generate interest, reassure suspicious players, and advertise local tournaments. Perhaps most importantly, he changed the tournament format from "double elimination," which means that a team is eliminated after losing two games - known in volleyball terms as "one-two, barbecue" - to pool play and play-offs, which encourages less experienced and weaker teams to participate because they are guaranteed more games and playing time. Hotz also started a new "King of the Beach" tournament to complement the existing Memorial Day and Labor Day event schedule. Duplicating the annual season-ending highlight of the AVP tour, this tournament has a unique format that requires each contestant to play one game against all other participants while constantly changing partners. In the end the player with the most victories or points scored is crowned "King of the Beach." The new tournament was first held on Christmas Day of 1999. After that, it shifted to Thanksgiving Day weekends. Apart from his managerial functions, Hotz continues to play himself whenever his time, his ailing knees, and his protective wife will allow. Although injuries and his advanced age have slowed him down considerably, he is still an inspiration for every player on the island.[13]

In another lucky turn of events, Hotz's taking a step back from the sport in 2004 coincided with what local players have called "the German invasion," the appearance at the shores of South Padre Island of Joern Wieland, a German who played professionally in Europe, and this author, who had played the game at the beaches of California while in Graduate School. Both complemented the "resident German," Ansgar Hagemann, a high school teacher and volleyball coach. Not only did these "Krauts"[14] bring a new enthusiastic and infectious attitude to the game, which would in turn attract new players; they were also always willing to help out when courts needed grading, nets needed mending, or new poles for the nets had to be put up. Nevertheless, beach volleyball on the

island continued to struggle with two interrelated problems: lack of interest and lack of official support.

The Current State of Beach Volleyball on South Padre Island

Contrary to the crowded courts on most California beaches, still no more than a handful of men and women play pick-up games during weekends on South Padre Island. This rather small group is at times enlarged by the occasional player from McAllen and Edinburg, who usually meet within their own small circle on the sand court at a Sonics Fast Food Restaurant, local college or high school athletes and coaches, students, tourists, and a few others who are limited by busy work and family schedules. Therefore, "center court," located in front of Boomerang Billy's, is usually enough to accommodate "challenge" games, in which the winning team stays on the court until it is beaten by a challenging team, which then takes on the next challenger and so on. At peak times during the spring and summer, a second court serves as a "work up court," with the winning team moving up to "center court" as the new challenger. The nets are kept at the men's height of eight feet, and men and women play on the same court because there are not enough women for separate women's games. But this arrangement also means that women have to be comfortable playing on a net six inches higher than they are used to. Although games are generally friendly, players strictly follow AVP rules and play hard to win because they do not want to sit down and wait for their next game. The competitive nature of these games unfortunately also discourages less experienced and skilled players. Even accomplished indoor players often get frustrated with beach doubles because the sun, the wind, and tighter rules require long periods of adjustment that only few are willing to make. For these reasons, then, the number of regular players at Boomerang Billy's remains small.

A more serious problem for the development of beach volleyball on the island, however, is the lack of understanding and support from the community, some local businesses, and the town. As

discussed before, both the Radisson Hotel and the town of South Padre Island were not interested in a continuation of the AVP event of 1988 or the annual amateur tournaments for financial considerations. They calculated that beach volleyball would only impede regular business. That such reasoning is shortsighted becomes clear when one considers that volleyball tournaments of any level attract players, their families, and spectators who, at the very least, will need accommodations and frequent restaurants on the island.

The events leading up to the Memorial Day Tournament of 2005 exemplify the arbitrary, inconsistent, and frequently self-contradictory "island attitude" toward beach volleyball. By the spring of the year, this author had become familiar enough with the conditions on the island to take over the organization of the event. Using his contacts and reputation from playing years of beach volleyball in California, he was able to recruit fifty-seven teams, which made the tournament the largest amateur volleyball event ever staged on South Padre Island.[15] Players from Mexico, Brazil, Germany, Lithuania, and the United States participated. In addition, the South Padre Island Convention and Visitors Bureau had generously designated $1,500 for prize money and other expenses. The large number of teams committed to participate, however, also meant that more courts than usual needed to be set up for the tournament, which posed a major problem because of an ongoing feud between Boomerang Billy's and the adjacent Embassy Suites. Management of the condominium complex does not approve of the loudness of Boomerang Billy's weekend entertainment, and therefore regards everything happening there, including volleyball games and tournaments, as despicable activities. Although S.P.I.V.B. is accepting equipment and prizes from Boomerang Billy's, it is not otherwise affiliated with the beach bar, yet has to suffer from the Embassy Suites' wrath. The Embassy managers claim that they pay taxes for its beachfront and therefore have the right to forbid the erection of "permanent structures," which includes volleyball courts. The author

approached the Embassy Suites to explain the situation and get permission to put up some courts for the two days of the upcoming tournament only on Embassy's beach front. The friendly request was denied emphatically. The author then set out to present his predicament at the next meeting of South Padre Island's Beach and Dune Commission. Commissioners listened benevolently and decided that the Embassy Suites had no rights to restrict "permanent structures" in an area reaching from the surf line to the dune line. If S.P.I.V.B. would want to set up its courts there, it would only have to apply for a town permit. S.P.I.V.B. acquired that permit, planning for the tournament continued, and nothing seemed to prevent a great volleyball spectacle on Memorial Day.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. On Thursday, May 26, 2005, two days before the tournament, the author received a call from the Convention and Visitors Bureau, asking whether or not S.P.I.V.B. had reached an agreement with the Embassy Suites. He replied that his attempt at conciliation had been rejected and that according to the Beach and Dune Commission no permission from the Embassy Suites was required in the first place. S.P.I.V.B. had acquired the necessary city permit and intended to go forward with setting up courts in the area defined by the Beach and Dune Commission between the surf line and the dune line whether Embassy Suites approved it or not. Two hours later, the town's Public Works Department called, threatening that its beach clean-up crews would tear down every volleyball court that would interfere with their vehicles. The author responded that S.P.I.V.B. had the required town permit signed by the Director of Public Works and expected to have a big volleyball tournament. The response was simple, "We don't care. We'll tear down every court in our way when we rake the beaches Saturday morning." Unfortunately, the Director of Public Works could not be reached that or the following day and S.P.I.V.B. was forced to set up the additional courts after the city's clean up crews had passed by in the early morning hours of May 28, the first day of the tournament. That meant that the author and other helpers, who

had also signed up to play in the tournament, had the additional handicap of already having worked for two hours before the first games started. Perhaps even more disturbing is the fact that the management of a local business, the Embassy Suites, motivated by its hostility to another local business, Boomerang Billy's, must have exerted so much influence on the town administration that a volleyball tournament sponsored and advertised by one branch of town government, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, ran into problems with another branch of the administration, its Public Works Department, and that even within the Public Works Department employees had no regard for a permit signed by their nominal superior.[16]

At this point, the author decided not to be involved with the organizational aspects of the tournaments any longer. Bart Shaw, one of original beach volleyball players on South Padre Island, who in the meantime had moved to Fort Worth, agreed to run subsequent events, which continued to be sponsored by the Convention and Visitors Bureau. Thus the annual tournaments have continued, albeit on a smaller scale, due in part to the damage done to the beaches by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, rising gas prices, and frustrations with different institutions on South Padre Island. On the other hand, some of the old problems have been resolved. For example, South Padre Island's Building Inspector finally consulted the maps designating property lines on island beaches, and, together with the new city manager unequivocally determined that the Embassy Suites has no rights to its beachfront, which made organization of tournament events easier. Local players are still participating in the tournaments and still can be found playing almost every weekend in front of Boomerang Billy's. Yet despite the efforts of the regulars, it remains difficult to attract new talent. As the old veteran Hotz laments, "I am disappointed that no new young people are interested in learning and playing in the Valley, although beach volleyball appears to be growing so big in other parts of the United States, Canada, and the rest of the world."[17]

Endnotes

1 Personal interview with Mary Kaye, May 22, 2005.

2 http://www.sopadre.com/sports.asp.

3 The *Island Breeze* and *The Port Isabel Press* cover the annual Memorial Day and Labor Day tournaments. The *Island Breeze* also offers an occasional article about local beach volleyball. See for example "The History of a Volleyball Player," June 30, 2005 and "All Hail the King," November 28, 2005. *The Brownsville Herald* publishes short announcements for the annual tournaments under its "Local Sporting Events" column.

4 The female pronoun is deliberately chosen because there are no male university or high school volleyball teams in the Rio Grande Valley.

5 Arthur Couvillon, *Sands of Time: The History of Beach Volleyball, Vol. 1: 1895-1969*, Information Guides, Hermosa Beach, CA, 2002, 29-35.

6 Dennis Hare and Jill Esteras, *The Art of Beach Volleyball*, Hogar Publishers, San Bernardino, CA,1981, 10-11; Karch Kiraly and Byron Shewman, *Beach Volleyball*, Human Kinetics Publishers, Champaigne, Ill., 1999, 2-9; and Sinjin Smith and Neil Feineman, *Kings of the Beach: The Story of Beach Volleyball*, Power Books, Los Angeles, 1988, 2.
The "Beach Volleyball Database," www.bvinfo.com/history argues that the sport may have emerged independently in Hawaii and Southern California.

7 See above sources and Arthur Couvillon, *Sands of Time: The History of Beach Volleyball, Vol. 2: 1970-1989* and *Vol. 3: 1990-2004*, Information Guides, Hermosa Beach, CA, 2003, 2004.

8 *The Art of Beach Volleyball*, 9. Parenthesis mine.

9 Personal interviews with Laura Terheggen, September 24, 2006, Bart Shaw, October 14, 2006, and Scott Gunn, October 15, 2006.

10 *Sands of Time: The History of Beach Volleyball, Vol.2*, 76. "Stoklos, Smith Win Tournament," *The Brownsville Herald*, March 13, 1988.

11 See *Beach Volleyball*, 150 and especially the chapter "The Fever" in *The Art of Beach Volleyball*, 33-45.

12 Personal interview with Linzy Hotz, August 29, 2006.

13 The paragraphs are based on the interviews with Linzy Hotz and Laura Terheggen.

14 All quotations are from a personal interview with Ashley Fenton, October 2, 2006.

15 "Net Draw: Volleyball Tournament Attracts Record Number of Competitors," *Island Breeze*, May 29, 2005, 5-6.

16 For an organizational chart of the Town of South Padre Island, see http://www.townspi.com/Departments/departments.html.

17 Personal interview Hotz.

A History of the Texas Tropical Trail Heritage Tourism Program in the Rio Grande Valley

by

Kimberlee D. Garza

Originally, the area between the Rio Grande River and the Nueces River was referred to, by the Spanish and Mexicans alike, as *"El Desierto Muerto"* or the Dead Desert. It was later labeled, by the Anglo-Americans who immigrated to the area in the 1830s, as the "Wild Horse Desert" because of the many horses that roamed the vicinity.[1] Today, the southern portion of this area is known distinctively as the Rio Grande Valley or simply "the Valley" and is part of the Texas Tropical Trail Region (TTTR), a program specifically developed by the Texas Historical Commission to promote heritage tourism and historic preservation throughout Texas. Focusing mainly on the Rio Grande Valley, it is the goal of this article to present a historic profile of the area, detailing the history of this historically unique area.

Working from the Coast up the Rio Grande River to Starr County, historical information on various sites within the TTTR's Rio Grande Valley Region will be presented and other sites of interest listed. To shift the focus out of the Rio Grande Valley, more details on the mission of the TTTR will provide a "breaking point" and less detailed information on the remaining sixteen counties will be presented. Because the TTTR is so diverse, geographic similarities or common histories will be pointed out to group several Counties into recognizable areas.

Historic Sites of the Rio Grande Valley

Beginning in Cameron County, located at the most southeastern tip of Texas, Spanish explorers first visited Brazos Island in 1519, but for thousands of years the area had been inhabited by local Native Americans. Located across the pass from South Padre

Island, this island is currently unoccupied, but once was home to two towns. A fort and a port were established in the 1820s by Mexico on the island's northern end, and the island also played important roles in the Mexican-American War and the Civil War. Just north of Brazos Island is South Padre Island, also inhabited by local Native Americans for years and then also explored in 1519 by the Spanish, who found the natives there hostile and even reported cannibalism. Around 1800, Padre Nicolas Ballí, for whom the island was named, founded the *Santa Cruz* Ranch on the island. A later occupant of the island, John Singer, buried a treasure near his ranch during the Civil War, but discovered that it had been swept away by a storm upon his return after the war's end. The treasure has yet to be discovered to this day.

Cameron County itself has been occupied by Spanish settlers since José de Escandón founded the Province of Nuevo Santander in the mid-1700s. As early as 1523, the area formerly known as *El Fronton* was explored by the Spaniard Francisco Garay. When Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, many entrepreneurs came to the Rio Grande Valley to invest in the lucrative trade industry. Port Isabel was an important port where many cargo ships docked and loaded supplies on burro caravans, which then traveled down along the Rio Grande River and into Mexico. In 1846, General Zachary Taylor was dispatched to the area and established a base at Port Isabel, as well as a field fort directly across the river from Matamoros to protect the United States' interests in Texas' entry into the Union. As a result, the first battles of the Mexican American War were fought in the area. The point was occupied by the American Army during the Mexican-American war and was renamed "Point" Isabel, in honor of Queen Isabella's role in the discovery of the New World. After the war, the point became an important port and customs location and the lighthouse was built in 1852. During the Civil War, both the Union and Confederate armies occupied the point. The Queen Isabel Inn was built in 1906 to lodge passengers and tourists traveling on the Rio Grande Railroad. Historic sites of interest to visit in

Port Isabel include the Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Site, the Port Isabel Historical Museum, and the Treasures of the Gulf Museum, built in 1899, originally a dry goods store and the main hub of activity in early Port Isabel.

When General Zachary Taylor established his field fort in 1846, later named Fort Brown, directly across the river from Matamoros, a small community began to flourish adjacent to the Fort. Named Brownsville, the city grew during the Civil War when cotton was run down the river to the Mexican port of Bagdad and helped supply the Confederacy. In 1863, the Confederate Army, as it evacuated the city, set fire to many of the downtown buildings and Fort Brown. Because of this fire, Fort Brown was reconstructed entirely in brick. In 1867, a hurricane also wreaked havoc on the fort, but many of the buildings still date back to this era, including the Post Hospital and Annex, the Post Morgue and Linen Storage, the Post Chapel, and the Calvary Building.

There are many historic sites and buildings throughout Brownsville. The Neale Home, built in 1848 for William Neale, is the city's oldest frame house. Also constructed in 1848 was a building known as the Gem, where Judge Hancock delivered one of his Civil War speeches from the balcony. The Stillman House, built in 1850 for Henry Miller, was later occupied by Brownsville's founder, Charles Stillman, and family. Adjacent to the 19th century restored home, courtyard, and stables is the Brownsville Heritage Complex that tells the story of Brownsville and the surrounding area. The City Hall or Old Market Square was built between 1850 and 1852, and served as the city's original marketplace. The San Román Building was built in 1850 for Don José San Román, a native of Biscay, Spain. John Webb, who ran a stagecoach line from the Webb and Miller Hotel, built the Webb Drug Store in 1852. Another immigrant from Spain, Adrián Ortiz, built a mercantile store in 1892 and called it *La Madrileña*. One year later, Don Andrés Cueto, also of Spain, housed his grocery, mercantile, retail and wholesale business in what is known today as the Cueto Building (*La Nueva Libertad*). The M. H. Cross Building, which

housed many businesses since being built in 1906, at one time served as a warehouse, a bakery, and a hotel.

Other Brownsville museums beside the Brownsville Heritage Complex include the Commemorative Air Force Museum - Rio Grande Valley Wing, the Costumes of the Americas Museum, and the Children's Museum of Brownsville. The fully restored 1928 Southern Pacific Railroad Depot now houses the Historic Brownsville Museum, and the Art League of Brownsville is housed in the relocated Neale Home on Fort Brown. Just five miles north of Brownsville lies the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, the location of the opening battle of the Mexican-American War on May 8, 1846.

Northwest of Brownsville and west from Port Isabel is the small community of Los Fresnos, famous for its Little Graceland Museum and its annual PRCA rodeo. The town was named for the *fresnos* (ash) trees scattered in the woods and along streams. In 1912, Lon C. Hill, an early landowner, formed a company to develop a canal system which would use the Rio Grande River to irrigate land for farming.[2] The land was originally part of a Spanish land grant, issued to José Salvador de la Garza in 1781, called *El Agostadero del Espíritu Santo*. From that time to the end of the Mexican War, four settlements, the farms *Los Cuates*, *Charco Hondo*, *Tres Norias*, and *Agua Negra*, developed in the vicinity that later became *Los Fresnos*.[3] Simon Vega, who served in Germany with Elvis Presley and has been collecting Elvis memorabilia since that time, owns the Little Graceland Museum. On State Highway 100 between Harlingen and Brownsville are the *Los Ebanos* Preserve and *Casa Los Ebanos*. Built in 1937, *Casa Los Ebanos* is filled with elegant furniture and surrounded by an 82-acre private nature park.[4]

Farther up the highway from Los Fresnos is the culturally rich community of San Benito. Founded in 1904, this community is known as the "Resaca City." John R. Peavey describes the origins of the *resacas* of South Texas in his book, *Echoes from the Rio Grande:*

> The old *"resacas"* which we see in Cameron County originally came from an old bed or channel of the Rio Grande; the word *"resaca"* is a Spanish word meaning Dry River. From all indications the old river has changed its course many times in the past years, gradually working its way in a southwesterly direction. The many *resacas*, along with the Arroyo Colorado which passes between San Benito and Harlingen, are all part of a natural drainage system through which the flood waters from the Rio Grande River in the early days made their way through this delta-like country to the Gulf of Mexico. This spared the county from disastrous floods many times.[5]

This community is the home of *conjunto*, an accordion-style, Latin-based music style. The town's rich music heritage includes icons such as the founder of *conjunto* music, Narciso Martínez, and the Grammy award-winner Freddy Fender.

The community celebrates its rich musical history through the Narciso Martínez Cultural Arts Center - named for Narciso Martínez. The center works to preserve and promote the development of Mexican heritage. Martínez is known to have started the first *conjunto* music recording studio in the 1930s in San Benito.

Harlingen is the next city up the highway, and has been a "Main Street City" for about twenty years. This city was laid out by founding father Lon C. Hill in 1904. He named the town after a friend, Colonel Uriah Lott, who was from the town of Harlingen in Holland. Hill and Lott worked together to bring the railroad to Harlingen and the Valley. This town was once called "Six Shooter Junction" for all the arms the men carried on their belts for protection against bandits. From 1914 to 1920, Harlingen and the Valley were tied to a one-crop economy, cotton, until innovations in irrigation brought the citrus industry to the entire Valley.

Harlingen has many historical attractions to visit, including the only replica in the United States of the Iwo Jima Monument. Located at the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, it was donated by its creator in the 1980s. The sculpture is next to the final resting place of one of the men depicted, Private Harlon Block of Weslaco, who died on the island six days after helping plant the American flag. Jackson Street has been Harlingen's main street since 1905 and encompasses some of the city's oldest buildings. The Texas Historical Commission's Main Street Program has helped the area continue to be prosperous, and many of the buildings are being used as antique shops, restaurants, and auction emporiums. The Harlingen Arts and Heritage Museum (formerly known as the Rio Grande Valley Museum) originally began in the 1952 detention center (jail) at the former Harlingen Army Air Force Base, which was donated by the H.E. Butt family in 1964. The city's first hospital, relocated from "F" street, was added in 1973, and in 1978 the *Paso Real* Stage Coach Inn was also relocated to the museum property. In 1989, the home of L.C. Hill was also relocated there, and all three buildings were restored. Each building is furnished in period pieces, and the detention center displays exhibits telling the history of the Valley. Other interesting sites in Harlingen include the Santos Lozano Building and "Silk Stocking Row." The Lozano Building is the oldest existing brick building in Harlingen and was built for Santos Lozano's mercantile business in 1915. Taylor Street is known as "Silk Stocking Row," and many beautiful early 20th century homes, built by the many successful businessmen of early Harlingen, can be admired there. One more interesting site and a "must see" in Harlingen is the Knapp Chevrolet Antique Auto Museum. This antique automobile showroom includes a 1929 Chevrolet, a 1957 Bellaire convertible, and several collectible Corvettes.

Moving north out of Cameron County and before traveling west up the Rio Grande River, it is important to include Willacy County as part of the Rio Grande Valley. This county is essentially the "Gateway" to the Valley, and it can be said that there is a definite

distinction in the landscape and plant life of the county when leaving the vast dusty ranchlands of Kenedy County, just to the north of Willacy. The county was named for State Senator John G. Willacy. An interesting historical note on Willacy County (although the practice was certainly spread throughout South Texas) is that in 1927 the residents of Willacy County were arraigned for violation of federal statutes prohibiting peonage. An illegal practice, peonage labor was often used in the early twentieth century in South Texas and usually involved a labor force composed of Mexican and African Americans, but often also involved poor Anglos. Among the defendants were Sheriff Raymond Teller, Carl Brandt, Frank Brandt, Justice of the Peace Floyd Dodd, L. K. Stockwell, C. S. Stockwell, Roger F. Robinson, Deputy Sheriff William Hargrove, C. A. Johnson, and R. D. Riesdorph. The trial resulted in convictions for Teller, Carl Brandt, Frank Brandt, Dodd, and L. K. Stockwell and acquittals for C. S. Stockwell, Robinson, and Riesdorph.[6]

Traveling north on Highway 77, some of the small ranch and farming communities include Sebastian, which was originally called Stillman and had settlers living there before 1906. The town was renamed Sebastian around 1912 in honor of John Sebastian, vice president of the Rock Island Railroad Company, which helped to develop the area. Lyford is the next community on the highway, named for William H. Lyford, who was an attorney for the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad. Since the early 1700s, the Spanish colonists in the area owned this land, which was part of three land grants. The vicinity was known as the *Como Se Llama* after a lake known locally as *Laguna Del Como Se Llama*.[7]

Located east and closer to the water is a small community called San Perlita, which was once part of the *San Juan de Carricitos* land grant, and was portioned off in 1881, when Richard King and Mifflin Kenedy won a suit against the Cavazos heirs. The San Perlita Development Company was established in 1926, and Charles Rene Johnson and W. G. Hecht designed and developed the town. The name was derived from Johnson's wife's name,

Pyrle. Port Mansfield is up the road from San Perlita and was formerly known as Red Fish Landing, until the United States Army Corps of Engineers opened the port in 1950. It was named for United States Representative Joseph J. Mansfield. Traveling back from the coast to Highway 77, Raymondville is the next stop in Willacy County, and was organized in 1904 by Edward Burleson Raymond, a former employee of the King Ranch. The Raymondville Historical Museum is housed in the old school building and features local history, as well as coastal and natural history. There is also a large collection of antiques, furniture, and paintings from the Kenedy Ranch on display.[8] Just to the west of Raymondville is Lasara, a community which derived its name by combining the names Laura and Sarah, the two wives of early settlers, William Harding and Lamar Gill. The site was originally part of the *Las Mesteñas, Pititas, La Abra,* and *San Juan de Carricitos* land grants.[9]

Heading back south a bit and to the west one enters Hidalgo County, which was formed in 1852 and named for Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, who gave the cry for Mexican independence from Spanish rule. The area had been settled by the Spanish when José de Escandón established four towns on the southern banks of the Rio Grande. La Villa is a small community in the northern part of the county, and is located on land that was once part of the land grant issued to Vicente de Ynojosa by Spain in 1797. A community existed in the area by 1800, but Anglo Americans did not begin to populate the town until after the railroad arrived in 1927. There are many little communities, such as La Villa, located throughout the counties of the Valley and the Texas Tropical Trail Region in general. Mercedes is the next fairly large community and is much closer to the river. Mercedes was founded by the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company in 1907 and was incorporated in 1909. The city's original name was Diaz, in honor of Porfirio Diaz, who was the president of Mexico at the time. It was then renamed Mercedes Diaz in honor of his wife and then shortened to just Mercedes and was also then know as

the "Queen City." The city is located on what was once part of the *Capisallo* Ranch, owned by Jim Wells. The Mercedes Memorial Library has a unique collection of over 500 vintage dolls from over 40 countries, and includes dolls from 11 tribes of Native Americans. Also located in Mercedes is a collection of vintage farm equipment, which is managed by a group of local farmers. The museum is on the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show grounds and helps to explain how important agriculture became to the Rio Grande Valley's economy and how farmers adapted equipment and developed new tools to turn the dry brush ranch land into lush and fruitful croplands.

Just east of the International Bridge is the *Toluca* Ranch. This ranch was a prized target for bandits during the days of Pancho Villa. It was built with several secret rooms and passages and heavy wooden shutters for protection and is a prime example of the measures taken by early settlers to protect their families and property.

Farther west is the neighboring town of Weslaco, which is on land that was once part of the *Llano Grande* grant. In 1917, 30,000 acres of the land was sold to the W.E. Stewart Land Company, from which the name Weslaco was derived. The town site was later sold to Ed. C. Couch, Dan R. Couch, R.C. Couch, and R.L. Reeves. Settlers from Chicago, Kansas City, and other parts of the Midwest converted the brush land into a thriving agricultural community. As a result of the growing agricultural industry, which also brought in the railroad, the city became racially segregated.

> *"El pueblo americano,"* as the Anglo side of town was called, consisted of well-built frame houses; it had paved streets and enclosed sewers. The Mexican side featured corrugated tin shacks, unpaved roads, and outhouses. Mexican women were supposed to shop on the Anglo side of town early on Saturdays only, and be back in "Mexican Town" by sunset. Streets north of the tracks had Spanish names, business was

conducted in Spanish, and schools were established for Mexican children. In "American Town," streets were named for northern states.[10]

In the late 1930s, Weslaco was called the city of neon at a time when almost all the businesses along Main Street used gas filled tubes for signage. Visitors can learn more about the history of Weslaco and the Rio Grande Valley in general by visiting the Bicultural Museum. The museum has an extensive photograph collection, artifacts from the community's first businesses, and early home furnishings. A tribute to Harlon H. Block, who was killed in action in 1945 and whose image is depicted in the Iwo Jima monument, is located in the museum. Other sites of interest are the Tower Theater (an active theater housed in the town's historic 1928 water tower storage tank); the *Villa de Cortez* (built in 1928 to serve as the community center, and a highlight of Weslaco used to attract farmers and land speculators during the early 20th century); and the Weslaco City Hall and Fire Station (renovated in 1998 and an excellent example of Spanish style architecture).[11]

Located in this area are several communities all tied together and all founded in the early 1900s, mostly by newly established entrepreneurs from the north who had moved to South Texas to cash in on the growing agricultural business. The growth of the agricultural industry in the Valley also led to the building of many railroad tracks to connect the rising economy to the rest of Texas and the United States. The town of Donna was named after the daughter of one of its founders, Thomas J. Hooks, in 1904, when the railroad came through the town site. The land was chosen as the town site because of the fertile soil and its good drainage. The Donna Hooks Fletcher Historical Museum is housed in the American Legion Hall, which was established in 1920 after World War I. Donna Hooks Fletcher was a successful pioneer farmer, rancher, and businesswoman. Her ranch, called Alameda Ranch, grew corn, cotton, and alfalfa, and also produced the famous "Melrose" brand of butter from its dairy. Donna also established a department store in the 1920s that was considered the finest in the

Valley. Artifacts and pictures in the museum describe the history of Donna and the Valley.

In 1908, two entrepreneurs, Peter Ebenezer Blalock and George T. Hawkins, laid out another town, built shipping pens, and named the railroad depot Ebenezer. The next year, they sold their land to the Alamo Land and Sugar Company, which moved the town, Camp Ebenezer, to higher ground, and the Alamo Town Site Company was formed by C.H. Swallow and Rentfro B. Creager. The town's two newest entrepreneurs then promoted the site to prospective settlers and it was incorporated and named Alamo after the Company in 1924.[12]

The town of *San Juan* was organized in 1909 by John Closner, and is on land that was part of two Spanish grants made in 1767 to Narciso Cabazos and to José María Ballí. One very significant event, which has contributed to this town's fame, occurred on October 23, 1970, when Francis B. Alexander smashed a single-engine plane into the *Virgen de San Juan del Valle* Shrine after having reportedly radioed a warning that all Methodist and Catholic churches in the lower Rio Grande Valley should be evacuated. The shrine, which had more than 130 people in it, was struck just twenty minutes later. Two priests were able to save the statue of the Virgin, and the shrine was rebuilt. Today the shrine is a mecca for many Christian followers. The very small area of Abram is also sometimes referred to as *Ojo de Agua*, because of its location near a creek that bears that name. It was named for Texas Ranger Abram Dillard who lived in the area. The creek is noteworthy in that it was used by the military to water their animals on the route from Fort Brown to Fort Ringgold. The city of Pharr was founded by the Pharr brothers of Louisiana in the early 1900s, and grew around the budding sugar cane industry. This town boasts two very interesting collections. One, a collection of jukeboxes at Smitty's Jukebox Museum, is housed in one of Pharr's first buildings and includes a wind-up Edison Victrola and the first Wurlitzer Model P10 from 1934. The Smitty family has owned and operated the museum and repair shop for over 50 years,

and still serves the Valley's restaurants and other entertainment businesses. Ye Old Clock Museum, a private collection, houses more than 2,000 vintage clocks dating back as far as 1690. The city of Pharr has recently purchased the collection and intends to include it in the exhibits of a new city museum, to be located in a renovated fire station.

McAllen and Edinburg are among the larger cities of Hidalgo County. They are tied to some of the smaller cities, including those just mentioned, as well as Mission and Hidalgo. McAllen was founded in 1909 and incorporated on February 21, 1911. It was named after James McAllen, who came to the Valley in the early 1850s from Edinburgh, Scotland. He owned 65,000 acres of land in the area, and, in 1909, William Briggs and other investors purchased 1,200 acres of the land from him, and founded the city. The area had already been settled in 1767 when the Spanish crown granted *porción* (portion) 63 to Antonio Gutiérrez, and then granted *Porción 64* to Juan Antonio Villarreal. José Manuel Gómez received a land grant from the Spanish crown in 1797, and established the Santa Anita Ranch. Salome Ballí was his great granddaughter, and she married James McAllen in 1862. Salome Ballí had inherited the Santa Anita Ranch. During the early 1920s, McAllen became the broom corn center of the Rio Grande Valley. The major oil boom of the 1930s in the Valley also helped McAllen and surrounding communities to prosper.[13] In 1908, a small town known as Chapin was selected as the new county seat of Hidalgo County. The settlement of Chapin was named after County Judge Dennis B. Chapin, but, in 1911, was renamed Edinburg. Edinburg is filled with rich historical reminders of the past. Even the names of the streets have their own history. They were named after Executives of the Southern Pacific Railroad in hopes that they would build a line to the Rio Grande Valley. Visitors can stop at the Hidalgo County Historical Museum, which is housed in the restored 1910 jail house, located just behind the Museum of South Texas. The Museum of South Texas is dedicated to preserving and presenting the borderland heritage of South Texas

and Northeastern Mexico and gives a broad overview of the region from prehistoric tribes through Spanish exploration and colonization, the Mexican War, Rio Grande steamboat era, Civil War, early ranching and farming, border wars and more. The Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives is home to thousands of photographs and historical documents of South Texas.[14] The Edinburg Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center is located in the restored 1927 Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, and features an exhibit with memorabilia relevant to the railroad's presence in the Valley.

La Lomita was a mission station between the Catholic missions at Roma and Brownsville. The Oblate Fathers of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate constructed an adobe chapel on the ranch and named it La Lomita in 1865. The City of Mission is located near La Lomita, and was established in 1906, when John Conway and J.W. Holt bought the land from the Oblate Fathers. Two years later, the Missouri Pacific Railroad founded a railway station near the hub of the new development. That same year, the City of Mission was founded, and it was suggested that the new town be named Mission after the La Lomita Mission. Mission Historical Museum focuses on the history of Mission and the surrounding communities from its early settlement onward. Exhibits also showcase local veterans, the development of different business endeavors in the area, festivities and the local agricultural industry.

Just along the river and across from Reynosa is the lovely community of Hidalgo, located on land settled by the Spanish colonizer José de Escandón in 1749. In 1848, Scottish-born merchant John Young founded a town site on Spanish land grants as a trading post and ferry landing opposite Reynosa. Originally named Edinburgh, the town's name was changed in 1876 in honor of the Mexican patriot, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. Hidalgo contains notable examples of border-style brick architecture from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Hidalgo Pumphouse Heritage and Discovery Center was first opened in 1909, and has

been completely restored with most of its original equipment still in place. The water pumped from the Rio Grande River turned the semi-arid brush land into an agricultural oasis. The Hidalgo Pumphouse is the only one remaining of the many pumping stations built in the Valley, and its museum explains the significance of the site and the importance of the pumphouse to the Valley's history and economy.[15]

Los Ebanos is another ferry crossing along the river, but this crossing has not been replaced by a bridge. It is the home of the last hand-operated ferry on the Rio Grande. The first recorded Spanish visit into the area was in the 1740s, when an ancient ford south of the area was crossed by explorers and colonists led by José de Escandón. It was then used as a salt trail leading to *El Sal del Rey*, forty miles to the northeast. The ford was used by Mexican War troops in 1846. Texas Rangers chased cattle rustlers across the spot in 1847, and smugglers made use of the crossing for decades, especially during Prohibition. The ferry and inspection station were established in 1950.[16]

Moving farther west and slightly to the north as you follow the river, the land begins to change from the rich fertile lands of the Lower Rio Grande Valley to land which was found to be more suitable for cattle and sheep. In 1638, Jacinto García de Sepúlveda followed the Rio Grande, and crossed into the area of Starr County at Mier. In 1687, the second expedition of Alonso De León in search of Fort St. Louis also followed the river route. In 1747, Miguel de la Garza Falcón explored the northern bank of the river in search of appropriate land for a settlement, and, in 1749, José de Escandón was assigned the task of colonizing the area. Settlers in the county during the late 1860s were predominantly Civil War veterans. In 1911, after a long feud between ranchers Ed Lasater and Manuel Guerra, Brooks County was carved out of northern Starr County, and Starr County lost its best farmland. In 1915, Starr County residents and livestock were a prime target of border raiders.[17]

Many small communities, which have been in the area since the very first settlements, still have residence today. Just east of tiny La Gloria is one of the United States' two bullfighting schools, the Santa María Bullfighting Arena. La Querencia Ranch is home to the no-kill Santa María Bull Ring. The town also boasts the former García Theater where Pedro Infante (the "John Wayne of Mexico") and other Mexican stars entertained audiences until the theater closed. In 1877, Santiago Peña named the town of San Isidro for St. Isidore of Seville, the patron saint of farmers. Visitors can view the remains of the town's historic well, the *noria de buque*. Also nearby are the town's original church, an old *sillar* house, and the ruins of a corral well.

Rio Grande City and Roma are the two largest cities in Starr County and Rio Grande City was originally part of the Garza Ranch in Mexico. When Henry Clay Davis married into the Garza Family, he and his wife, María Hilaria de la Garza, moved to the site of Rio Grande City to have some privacy and ended up beginning the town. Rio Grande City is a "Main Street City," and has over 600 historic buildings. The town is also noteworthy for the replica of the Grotto Shrine at Lourdes, France, using petrified wood and native stone from the *Roma* area, located at the Immaculate Conception Church. Dedicated in 1928, it has become an important historic site in the Rio Grande Valley. Another visitor's delight is the La Borde House and Hotel, which is rumored to be haunted. Built in 1897, this two-story brick structure, originally called the Ringgold Hotel, has a rich history. The original house had seven rooms and a parlor furnished in turn-of-the-century furnishings. Fort Ringgold is also located in Rio Grande City, and was founded in 1848 after the Mexican War had ended. The fort was named for Major Samuel Ringgold, and served as a base for protection forces during periods of bandit raids in the border area. General Robert E. Lee stayed in the fort's Commandant's Quarters during his brief command at the fort in 1859. Today, the Commandant's Quarterhouse is a museum dedicated to the exhibition and preservation of the fort's artifacts.

Roma became part of the United States in 1848, but has a very long history, similar to other communities along the river. The name for Roma came from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who founded a mission in the mid-1850s there. The town was also the westernmost port for the steamships that ran up and down the Rio Grande from 1850 to 1900. Roma's Historic District has many buildings and homes dating from the original town site. The master stonemason and architect, Heinrich Portscheller, a German immigrant, moved to Roma from Mexico in 1883 and helped to influence the distinctive architectural style of the Lower Rio Grande. The historic part of town was also featured in the black and white movie "Viva Zapata," starring Marlon Brando.[18] Portscheller constructed the Manuel Guerra House and Store near the Plaza between 1878 and 1884. Other homes constructed by Portscheller were the Antonia Sáenz House, the Tino Ramirez Residence and Store, and the Old Roma Convent. The Roma Historical Museum is housed in a hand-built chapel constructed for the secular priests from Mier (Mexico) circa 1840. From that time until about 1854, it was used for that purpose. Changing exhibits trace influence of American, Spanish and Mexican cultures and feature historic arts and crafts. The Roma Historic District includes properties along Estrella and Hidalgo Streets between Garfield St. and Bravo Alley. Found in this area are the Edward R. Hord Office/ Ramirez House/Hospital, the Church Tower of *Nuestra Señora del Refugio* and Parish Hall, the Custom House, the Leocadia Leandro García House, the John Vale/Noah Cox House, the Nestor Saenz Store, and the Manuel Guerra Building. This is truly a town that is reminiscent of the first Spanish settlements along the river; history can be seen and felt down every charming street and alley.

The Texas Tropical Trail Region (TTTR) Program

The Texas Tropical Trail Region (TTTR) is, along with the Texas Mountain Trail Region, the newest of ten regions in the Texas Heritage Trails Program (THTP). The THTP facilitates local assistance and promotion through ten heritage trail regions that stretch across the state. The THC provides technical, educational,

financial, and promotional assistance to each heritage trail region active in the program. A regional coordinator is hired, and regional boards are formed in all active heritage trail regions to encourage heritage tourism efforts. The boards and regional coordinators partner with the THC to facilitate individual site development as well as promotion of the entire region as a heritage tourism destination. (THC Heritage Tourism Flyer)

The Texas Tropical Trail Region is composed of twenty counties, beginning with the northwest county of Dimmit and progressing east to include La Salle, Live Oak, San Patricio and Refugio counties as the northern boundaries, and including all the counties to the south, ending at the Rio Grande River international border. In 2005, site evaluations were conducted by a team of tourism and history experts from the THC, whose goal was to evaluate the heritage resources of the region and to help to develop those resources as tourist destinations. In the beginning stages of the development of the region, heritage and tourism partners were asked to submit inventories of all the heritage tourism sites within the region. The THC staff then, with the assistance of the regional coordinator, narrowed that list down based on some basic guidelines. Those guidelines singled out sites that were open to the public, had interpretive displays, and had a desire to attract more tourism. The sites were preferably heritage oriented, but some natural and cultural sites were included. Left out of these site evaluations were historic homes not open to the public, historic hotels and restaurants (unless an interpretive display was present for evaluation), historic landmarks that had no interpretive display to evaluate (such as forts or battlefields), historic churches, and private historic ranches.

It is the Texas Tropical Trail Region's vision to "showcase the heritage, natural beauty and rich culture of South Texas for the benefit and enjoyment of Texans and travelers." It is the region's mission "to identify, preserve and interpret the natural, historic and cultural resources of South Texas through partnerships." The

Texas Tropical Trail Regional office is located in Kingsville on the Texas A&M University campus, in Baugh Hall.

A brief description of the other sixteen counties within the TTTR

To continue now with a brief description of the other sixteen counties within the TTTR, we'll begin with Zapata County, and continue our path up the Rio Grande River. Originally part of Starr and Webb counties, Zapata County was organized in 1858, and named for local rancher Antonio Zapata. Miguel de la Garza Falcón led an exploration down the northern bank of the Rio Grande from the site of present day Eagle Pass to the mouth of the river in 1747. This route later became known as the Old Military Highway, used by the military, as well as traders, as a land route from the mouth of the river in the Valley up the river. Three years later, José Vázquez Borrego founded the first settlement of the county, which he named *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores Hacienda* a few miles from the site of present San Ygnacio. By 1848, thirty-nine *porciones* and fifteen other tracts of land had been granted to individuals either by Spanish authorities or by the Mexican government. One of these first settlers was José Clemente Gutiérrez, who later sold his land to José Clemente Ramírez. In 1780, Ramírez then married Margarita de la Garza Falcón, thus uniting two of the area's most distinguished families, and moved to the old site of Falcón. The place was called *Ramireño de Abajo* until in 1915 the village changed its name to Falcón in honor of the wife of the founder. The building of Falcon Dam in 1953 caused a major flood, and the town was moved farther inland to higher ground. When the dam caused the area to flood, many of the oldest settlements along the river had to relocate. The current location of Lopeño was created out of the old town residents and people from four other small farming and ranching communities -- San Pedro, San José, Santa Fé and El Tigre. Most of these residents can trace their ancestors back to the original settlers brought by Escandón. The first name of the village of Zapata was Habitación, which was later changed to Carrizo. In 1858, the name was changed

to Bellville, and then again in 1898 it was changed to Zapata, in honor of Antonio Zapata. In order to protect early settlers in the 1850s, two military posts, Camp Drum and Camp Harney, were established at Zapata. Zapata flourished during the 1870s, when Mexico declared a duty-free zone along the border. Like many other towns in the area, the original town site was relocated to higher ground upon the completion of Falcon Dam in 1953. The Colonel Antonio Zapata Museum has exhibits that tell the history of the community and the area in general.

Bustamante is a tiny community that was the ranch headquarters for the Las Comitas ranch in the 1870s and was named for Pedro José Bustamante, the owner of the ranch. San Ygnacio (Ignacio) claims to be the oldest town in Zapata County, settled in 1830 by former residents of Revilla (now Nuevo Guerrero, Tamaulipas). It was named for the patron saint of Guerrero, Saint Ignatius Loyola. In 1830, Jesus Treviño, the leader of the new settlement, built Fort Treviño as his home. A sundial was built at the home in 1851, and has become a tourist attraction. San Ygnacio was the site of a fight between Confederate troops and the followers of Juan N. Cortina during the Civil War. In 1916, troops of President Venustiano Carranza raided the United States border, and fought a United States Cavalry unit there. Also located in San Ygnacio is the county historical museum, which features exhibits that include photos of old Zapata, antique ranch furniture, and early medical equipment.

Traveling north along the river is the last county in the TTTR to border the river. Webb County was established in 1848 and named for Judge James Webb. Previous to the establishment of the county, the area was mostly populated with Spanish settlers, who found the land perfect for ranching. Laredo was established in 1755 as part of the province of Nuevo Santander and has a very rich history. Laredo was a logistical support center for Santa Anna's invading army during the Texas Revolution, and, even after the war, residents of Laredo still considered themselves to be citizens of Mexico. In January of 1840, the Republic of the Rio Grande

was proclaimed with Laredo as the capital. Mexico City sent forces to reclaim Laredo and the surrounding area, but Laredo remained somewhat independent until the Mexican War. During this time, Texas Ranger Robert Gillespie raised the United States flag over the city and an American garrison later occupied the town. In 1848, Laredo became the Webb County seat.[19] Laredo has many historic sites and neighborhoods, including El Barrio Azteca, the Hamilton Hotel, La Posada Hotel, the Southern Hotel, and the San Augustín Roman Catholic Church. Fort McIntosh is located in Laredo and was one in a series of forts established across the Texas frontier in the period following the Mexican War. Fort McIntosh served the United States Army through the Second World War, and the ruins of the original earthen star-shaped fort still exist. Visitors can learn about Laredo's colorful history by visiting the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum, which is housed in what was once the headquarters of the Republic of the Rio Grande. They can also visit the Washington's Birthday Celebration Museum, located next door to the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum.

Other small towns in this very large county include Mirando City, where, nearby, peyote cactus still grows, harvested by *peyoteros*, who supply peyote for religious ceremonies to Indians in the United States. Oilton got its name after the discovery of oil in 1922, but was previously called *Torrecillas* or "little towers" for two limestone rock formations nearby. Mexican settlers were in the area as early as the 1860s, but the town of Bruni was named after Antonio Bruni who arrived in Texas around 1877 and was an Italian immigrant.

Progressing east and a bit south away from the river is Jim Hogg County, named in honor of James Stephen Hogg. The county has a unique bi-cultural Texas-Mexican ranching heritage and *vaquero* ethic. After the arrival of the railroad in 1883, Hebbronville became, for a time, the largest cattle-shipping center in the nation. It was named for James Hebbron, a local rancher. There are many vast ranches in the county, one being the *Rancho Randado* which was a popular stopping point at the division of the roads between

Hebbronville, Rio Grande City and Laredo. Adjacent to Rancho Randado is La Mota Ranch Nature Retreat, which offers tours and overnight nature retreats. Rancher A. Guerra established the permanent settlement of Guerra in the early 1900s. Because of the red sandy soil of the area, early settlers called the town El Colorado. Today, if one stops at Guerra, he will find the Rancho Colorado Post Office and Museum. This Post Office has been family-owned for generations, and triples as the local family museum, Guerra family home, and Rancho Colorado Bed and Breakfast.[20]

Even farther east, closer to the coast, the landscape of Brooks County is both ranching and farming land, and the county is nationally renowned for its cattle breeding and meat production. There are many small ranching communities within the county that were some of the first Spanish settlements of the area. These include Encino, Rachel, Tacubaya, La Mesa, Lucero, La Parrita, Los Olmos, and Las Cuatas. The county seat and largest city of Falfurrias was founded in 1883, and was originally a stopping point for those traveling north. The town's founder, Ed Lasater, put the town on the map when he began several small dairy farms in the early 1900s and constructed the Falfurrias Creamery, which is still known for its "sweet cream butter." Also located just north of the city limits is the shrine of Pedro Jaramillo, a *curandero* or "faith healer" who offered free remedies to those who came to be healed by his gift. He died on July 3, 1907, and his burial place has become a shrine still visited by thousands of believers every year. The Heritage Museum in Falfurrias also covers a variety of local history, including a room dedicated to the Texas Rangers.

Kenedy County is the next county east, and ends with the coast on its east side and the "Valley" to the south. It was created in 1921 from parts of Hidalgo and Willacy counties, and was named for pioneer rancher Mifflin Kenedy. The county seat was established at Sarita, where John G. Kenedy, the son of one of the founders of the Kenedy and King Ranches, built his headquarters. The area has remained very similar to its early pioneer days with many of the generations of locals tracing their roots back to the first Mexican

families that came to work for the King and Kenedy Ranches.[21] These locals are identified as *Kineños* and *Kenedaños,* and their ancestors were the first *vaqueros,* or cowboys, to work the ranches.[22] The Kenedy Ranch Museum of South Texas is located in the beautifully restored Kenedy Pasture Company Headquarters in Sarita. The walls of the museum are covered with interpretive murals that tell the story of South Texas settlement and the Kenedy family's influence on the history of the area.

Bordering Kenedy County to the north is Kleberg County, another county known for its ranching heritage. It was in 1853 that Richard King purchased the Santa Gertrudis grant from the heirs of the original Spanish grantees. From this purchase, Richard King and his partner Mifflin Kenedy established their famous ranches, known for their innovations in ranching and cattle and horse breeding. One of the smaller communities of the county is Riviera, which is located near the coast. Theodore F. Kock gave the community its name because it reminded him of the French Riviera. In 1908, a group of German-American families, sponsored by the Catholic Colonization Society, settled several miles northeast of Riviera, just before Kingsville, and called their small community Vattman. Today the very small community boasts a beautiful church that is the center of the community. Just south of Kingsville, Ricardo was founded in 1908 as a trading center for farmers living nearby, who could transport their produce to the railroad that ran through town.

Kingsville is the largest city, and was officially established in 1904 with the arrival of the railroad, but the King Ranch, whose headquarters are located just west of the town site, was founded in 1853. The new Train Depot Museum is housed in the original, restored 1904 railroad depot, and depicts the importance of the railroad to Kingsville and the surrounding area. The John E. Conner Museum and the South Texas Archives are both located on the campus of Texas A&M University-Kingsville. They were established to preserve and make available to the public numerous documentary materials about the history and natural history of

South Texas. The King Ranch Museum at the Henrietta Memorial Center is located in Kingsville's original 1904 Ice House, which was renamed in honor of Henrietta King. The King Ranch itself is a working ranch, and many ranching techniques used today originated on this ranch. The ranch is known for having bred the award-winning breed of Santa Gertrudis cattle. It also has an award-winning record in horse breeding and racing, and its craftsman's leather and furniture designs are now offered in an exclusive line of merchandise.[23]

Continuing with the ranching and farming theme, we move north and inland to Jim Wells County, which remained largely uninhabited by Europeans until 1754. At this time a captain from Laredo, Tomás Sánchez, established a settlement at Peñitas Creek. Cattle breeding was the primary industry in the area until 1910, when large-scale farming began. Premont is located at the very southern tip of the county, and is just nine miles north of Falfurrias in Brooks County. R.P. Haldeman of St. Louis, Missouri, a banker and real estate developer, bought the land surrounding Premont from the heirs of Henry Seeligson. Haldeman named his new town Premont after Charles Premont, the Seeligson's Ranch Foreman. Ben Bolt, a tiny town founded by L. B. Collins in 1904, is farther up Highway 281. Alice is the next town along the highway and is the largest settlement. The city of Alice was named for Alice King Kleberg, the daughter of one of the King Ranch founders, and is the county seat. Alice is recognized as "The Birthplace of *Tejano* music" and has the oldest standing concrete water tower in the world. There are three museums to visit in Alice including the South Texas Museum which focuses on the common history and customs of this South Texas region, the Tejano R.O.O.T. S. (Remembering Our Own Tejano Stars) Hall of Fame Museum which highlights the founders and stars of the Tex-Mex music known as Tejano, and the Third Coast Squadron of the Commemorative Air Force Museum which has excellent displays depicting and honoring the lives of our veterans and war heroes.

Orange Grove and Sandia are two other little communities located in the northeastern part of Jim Wells County, which is more farm oriented. Orange Grove was originally part of the Ventana Ranch owned and operated by George and Hannah Reynolds. The Orange Grove Area Museum has a variety of exhibits which focus on the traditions and history of Orange Grove and the surrounding area. Sandia, which means "watermelon" in Spanish, was founded by Fennell Dibrell and Max Starcke, who had purchased the land from Joseph B. Dibrell. The original site was in the *Casa Blanca* land grant, issued to Juan José de la Garza Montemayor. John L. Wade purchased it and established the Casa Blanca Ranch (Wade Ranch), and upon his death the ranch was divided among his heirs, one of whom sold his share to Joseph B. Dibrell.

Duval County is cushioned between Jim Wells and Webb Counties, and had long been known as a no man's land, inhabited by unfriendly Indians and bandits. The county was named for Burr H. Duval, a soldier of the Texas Revolution who died in the Goliad Massacre. The first group of European settlers arrived in 1867 in pursuit of the growing sheep raising industry. The county has always been an important cattle round-up area, with trail drives ending in Dodge City, Kansas. Duval County played a central part in the cattle industry of South Texas and also has a somewhat seedy political history. Long before the town of San Diego was established, this site was known to travelers between Goliad and Mier as a watering hole. Pablo Perez of Mier, Tamaulipas, Mexico brought the first group of permanent settlers and founded Perezville, which was renamed San Diego in 1852. There are many historic buildings and homes in San Diego, including an 1852 blockhouse built of hand-cut *caliche* and known as the Casa Blanca. Housed in one of San Diego's historic homes is the Duval County Historic Museum which interprets the history of Duval County.

Other communities in Duval County include Benavides, located on Las Animas Creek. Benavides has a city park which is very reminiscent of the *plazas* of Mexico. Traditional Mexican influences

can be seen throughout the architecture in the town. Realitos is located on Macho Creek, and was formed on what was formerly the *Santos García* Spanish land grant. This site was a campsite for both Mexican soldiers in the 1830s and for the Texas Rangers. It was also the headquarters for E.C. Lasater, the hostile rival of Duval County political boss Archer Parr. The historical homestead and store of Cecilio Valerio, a famous 1850s horse breeder, can be seen in the little settlement of La Rosita. The town of Freer was first known as "Government Wells," as the location of water wells dug by United States Calvary troops in 1876. Previous to the name of "Government Wells," the area was known to Mexican settlers as *Las Hermanitas*, or "The Little Sisters," for two hills marking the area. Freer is historically known as the "Rattlesnake Capital of the United States," and puts on the Rattlesnake Roundup each year in April.

Having covered the ranching counties of central South Texas, we now move to the northern counties of the region, which are also involved in some of the same ranching and farming practices. Created in 1858 out of Bexar, Atascosa, and Live Oak counties, McMullen County was frequently traveled through by Indians, Spaniards, Mexicans, and later Anglo-Americans. There are no incorporated cities in McMullen County. One interesting story, evocative of popular "wild west" tales, happened near Tilden on Sept. 28, 1870. A group of Indians and bandits from Mexico raided the county near Tilden and ambushed the Thomas W. Stringfield family. Thomas and his wife were stabbed and shot to death, as was their six-year-old son Adolphus, but the fate of their other son, Thomas, who was four-years-old, was never discovered. The one survivor, their daughter, eight-year-old Ida Alice, fought to evade capture. She was then speared seven times, crushed by the raiders' horses, and left for dead. She was eventually rescued, and lived to tell the story. The town of Calliham was originally called Guffeyol, but was changed in 1922, when it became a boom town after oil and gas was discovered in the area. After the oil and gas boom washed out, the town was abandoned. Due to the

creation of Choke Canyon Lake in 1970, most of the original town site is now underwater. The town of Tilden was named for the unsuccessful Democratic presidential candidate, Samuel J. Tilden, in the election of 1876. It was founded at the mouth of Leoncita Creek in 1858. The town actually has had many different names. It was first known as "Dogtown," because it was frequented by bandits, Indians, outlaws, and gunmen. The town name was changed to Colfax in 1871, and then to Tilden in 1877. This town is now a perfect example of a modern-day "cow" town, with its one blinking light, a charming courthouse building, and neighborhood streets still unpaved. The Dog Town Jail was built in 1880, and the McMullen County Historical Museum is located in the 1865 Old Rock Store building, and features local city and county history. The building itself tells the history of a real Wild West town, with tales of holdups, bandits, shootouts, and stagecoach interceptions.

Trekking back west, one enters La Salle County, created in 1858 and attached to McMullen County for judicial purposes. This area is referred to as the "Brush Country" or *"Brasada."* The small community of Cotulla was named for a Polish immigrant, Joseph Cotulla, who donated 120 acres in 1881 to lure the railroad into the county. Lyndon B. Johnson was a teacher in Cotulla at the beginning of his career, and short story writer O. Henry also lived in Cotulla at one time. The Brush County Museum was the original one-room school house, and an addition now connects the building to an early 1900s home. Fort Ewell was established in 1852 to guard the frontier settlers and the main road between San Antonio and Laredo. The fort was located at what was known as the Guajuco Crossing on the Nueces River, but was abandoned in 1854. When La Salle County was organized in 1880, the county chose Fort Ewell as its primary settlement, and near the site they established the first courthouse, known as Mrs. Ford's Hotel. In 1882, the county records were transferred to the town of La Salle and then to Cotulla in 1883. There remains no physical evidence

of the fort, but a State Historical Commission marker is located at the site.

The northernmost and easternmost county in the TTTR was named for Philip Dimmitt, one of the framers of the Goliad Declaration of Independence. Dimmit County is part of the Winter Garden Region of Texas. The town of Catarina was established after Asher Richardson, a rancher, decided to build a railway link from Artesia Wells to his planned town of Asherton. Since at least 1778, legend claims that the name Catarina was the name of a Mexican woman killed by Indians on or near the town site. The Catarina Hotel is still open for business today, as is the Pueblo Trading Post. One of the area's largest ranches, the Valenzuela, was started in the 1870s by Thomas Kearney and James A. Carr. Asherton was founded between 1909 and 1917, and was planned as a model of beauty and convenience for its day. The name for the town of Carrizo Springs comes from the local springs, named by the Spanish for the cane grass that once grew around them. It is the county seat and the oldest town in the county. The town was founded in 1865 by a group of fifteen families from Atascosa County, who were led by Levi English. About two years later a group of settlers from Goliad also came to the town. The Dimmit County Public Library and Wade House Memorial Museum displays the Wade House Indian artifacts collection, as well as Carrizo Springs and Dimmit County memorabilia.

To complete the region, we travel back across Dimmit, La Salle, and McMullen Counties to Live Oak County. This county is principally supported by oil and gas production, ranching, refining, and tourism. Lake Corpus Christi and Choke Canyon Reservoir are well-known tourist sites. Live Oak County is the birthplace of the famous author J. Frank Dobie. First named Hamiltonburg, the community of Three Rivers was later named for its location near the rivers. In 1880, George Washington West and his wife, Kittie, moved to Live Oak County and purchased 140,000 acres of land for a cattle ranch. In 1912, he donated his name, a town site, $100,000, and thirteen miles of railroad right-of-way through his

ranch in order to establish a town on the railroad. After the turn of the century, George West then put his efforts into colonization. The name for the town of Whitsett was settled on by a coin toss between the two men who had donated land for the railroad in 1913. Taylor Whitsett called the coin toss against Walter Reiffert, and so this tiny town was named after him.

Closer to the Coastal Bend area is San Patricio County, which was established in 1836 by the Congress of the new Republic of Texas. *Empresarios* James McGloin and John McMullen founded San Patricio in 1829, after they received permission from the Mexican government in 1828 to settle two hundred Irish Catholic families in Texas. The town site was called Villa de San Patricio de Hibernia in honor of Ireland's patron saint. The Old Dougherty House was built in 1876, and was the home of the owner of the St. Paul's Academy for Boys, Robert Dougherty. The McGloin Homestead was built by James McGloin in 1855 in the Old Colony of San Patricio de Hibernia and is thought to be the last remaining *empresario's* home in Texas. Named for Thomas H. Mathis, who helped to start the Coleman, Mathis, and Fulton Cattle Company, Mathis was founded in 1887. The town of Odem was platted in 1909 by John James Welder and David Odem. In the early 1930s the Pioneer Cannery in Odem produced Del Mar brand vegetables.

The town of Sinton is located on the southern bank of Chiltipin Creek, and was at first just a station for the railroad in 1885. Then George W. Fulton received consent from the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company's board of directors to give 640 acres for an actual town site. They named the town for one of the stockholders in the company, David Sinton. The town of Taft was named for Charles Taft, another businessman involved in the Colman-Fulton Pasture Company. Taft was originally called *Mesquital*, after a windmill nearby that was called *Mesquital* Mill. The Taft Blackland Museum is located in what was once the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company headquarters. The Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company was also involved in the founding of the city of Gregory. Located across the

bay from Corpus Christi, the city of Portland was founded in 1891 when the Portland Harbor and Improvement Company filed a map of the city at the County Courthouse, after having purchased the land from John G. Willacy. The city is positioned on a 40-foot-high bluff, and overlooks both Corpus Christi and Nueces Bays. Aransas Pass was named for the pass between Mustang and St. Joseph Islands. In the 1850s, the Central Transit Company began construction on the harbor and the railroad, and a port was also started. A coastal town, Ingleside, was first colonized in 1830, and was called Palomas, which means "doves" in Spanish.

Nueces County was formed from San Patricio County in 1846, and organized the same year. But the area has a long history, with evidence of the presence of the Aransas Indians, a nomadic hunter-gatherer people, around A.D. 1200-1300. The ancestors of the Kawakawa Indians moved into the region around A.D. 1400, and various Indian tribes occupied the area until around 1519, when it is thought that Alonzo Álvarez de Pineda reached Corpus Christi Bay. The first successful settlement was founded by Blas María de la Garza Falcón, who established a ranch called Santa Petronila, on Petronila Creek in 1766. There was an Indian uprising in the area in 1812, and the colonists abandoned the area. The colonists later returned, but frequent skirmishes with the Indians continued. By 1839, *empresario* Colonel Henry Lawrence Kinney had established a frontier trading post at Corpus Christi, and, after 1845, the city began to grow in population when Gen. Zachary Taylor's army arrived there in September 1845, but it quickly shrank again after the Mexican War. Corpus Christi has many museums and historic sites to visit, including the Asian Cultures Museum and Educational Center, the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History, the *Instituto de Cultura Hispania* (Institute of Hispanic Cultures), the Selena Museum, the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay, Heritage Park, and the Centennial House, which was built in 1848 and is the oldest existing home in Corpus Christi.[24]

The first settler of Port Aransas was an Englishman who built his ranch house there in 1855. The site later developed into a small

fishing village. In 1886, Frank Stephenson opened an inn in an old barracks located at the site. He called the hotel the "Tarpon Inn" for the abundant trophy fish in nearby gulf waters. It has been destroyed and rebuilt several times. Further inland, the community of Robstown was established by George Paul of Washington, Iowa, in 1906. The town was named for Robert Driscoll. It grew rapidly after the development of the Winter Garden Region as a truck-farming area and the discovery of oil in Nueces County in 1930. In the very southwestern corner of Nueces County is the tiny township of Bishop. With the dream of creating a model town, surrounded by farm tracts, F.Z. Bishop purchased 2,300 acres from the Driscoll Ranch in 1910. By 1923, the township of Bishop was referred to as the "Cotton Capital of the Coast," and later proudly added the title of "Grain Mart of the Coastal Bend."

Located on the Gulf Coast and north of Nueces County, Aransas County is divided by Copano, St. Charles, and Aransas bays. The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge encompasses most of the northern portion of the county and works to preserve the original and natural beauty of the area. The area has been an important part of the history of Texas. It was at Copano Bay that the Spanish docked to transport supplies inland to several of its first settlements. Copano Bay, located near the mouth of Mission Bay, was the first port in Texas, even before Indianola or Galveston. The area was originally used by a group of Karankawa Indians, called the Copanes, as a fishing village. In the early 1700s, it was used by the Spanish to supply such inland communities as Goliad, Refugio, and San Antonio. The port was also important during Texas' fight for independence; Martín Perfecto de Cos' troops came ashore there for their march inland. The Texas Rangers captured three Mexican supply ships in a confrontation called the "Horse Marine" incident, and during the Civil War, troops used it as a gathering point. The Copano Bay port then slowly disappeared, and the town site eroded into the bay.

Established as a shipping point in 1867, Rockport became the county seat of Aransas County in 1871. The Texas Maritime Museum covers everything from historic lighthouses through the history of blockade runners to the current gas and oil industry located in the Gulf. Beginning with French and Spanish exploration, the museum tells the stories of the Gulf Coast and of South Texas in general.[25] Founded in 1866, the settlement of Fulton was named for George Ware Fulton, Sr., who was an entrepreneur from Philadelphia and helped establish many of the local communities in the area. An example of classic French Second Empire architectural styling, the Fulton Mansion was completed in 1877 by George and Harriet Fulton, and was initially called "Oakhurst."[26]

The last county in the TTTR was named for the Mission of *Nuestra Señora del Refugio*, which was established by the Spanish in 1793 at the junction of the San Antonio and Guadalupe rivers. In 1795, the mission was moved to a location on the Mission River at the site of the present city of Refugio. Anglo-American immigration in the area that is now Refugio County was limited until after 1836. In 1828, James Power and James Hewetson received permission to settle Irish Catholics and Mexican families in the area. Founded by Preston R. Austin in 1911, the name of the settlement of Austwell was derived from the first syllable of Austin's name and the last syllable of the name of his partner, Jesse C. McDowell. The site of the city of Refugio was a favorite camping ground of Kawakawa Indian tribes, and in time a permanent village developed there. Refugio was founded in 1834 near the site of the abandoned Mission *Nuestra Señora del Refugio*. By electing Sam Houston and James Power to represent Refugio at the First Convention of Texas to form a new government, the people of Refugio opened the way for the "Day of San Jacinto." The Refugio County Museum features the history of Refugio County, and includes details on a walking tour of the many historic homes of Refugio, the bell from the original mission, as well as exhibits on science, art, and archeology. Woodsboro is the last town to be named in this journey across the Rio Grande Valley, along the Rio Grande River, into

the ranching and farming communities of the Brush Country and the Winter Garden region, and back east to the Coastal Bend area. Woodsboro was founded in 1906 by W.C. Johnson and George P. Pugh, who came to Texas from Danville, Illinois. The two entrepreneurs advertised the surrounding farmlands, and Anglo settlers began to move in.

Conclusion

From this brief description of the Texas Tropical Trail Region, one can see that the history of South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley is very unique. From the Indians who first roamed its grassy plains through the European explorers and adventurous pioneers who settled the area to the Anglo settlers who saw the opportunity for change and economic development, the people who have called South Texas their home have learned to adapt in many ways. Today, the Rio Grande Valley is changing once again as new economic opportunities invite new settlers, and many of the small rural communities begin to merge together. It is the goal of the TTTR, its many partners, and the THC to preserve the rich natural, cultural, and historic uniqueness of this area as growth continues to change its landscape.

Regional Coordinator

The Texas Tropical Trail Heritage Tourism Program in the Rio Grande Valley

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Endnotes

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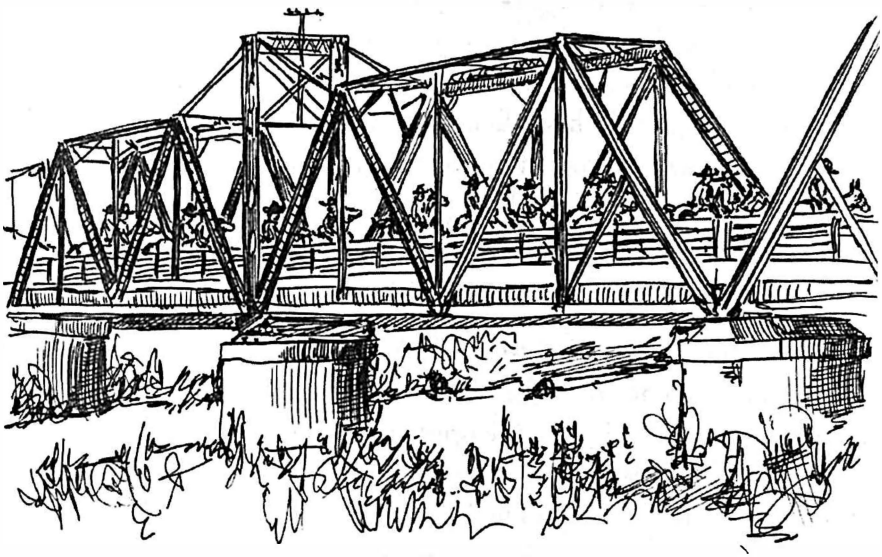
INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

The Medic

Gathered by Peter Gawenda in September 1988 at the TSC Library, and in June 1992 to November 2005 at different office locations on the UTB/TSC Campus



For quite some time, the former Military Hospital on the campus of Texas Southmost College, now called Gorgas Hall, has had appearances that are linked to former occupants of Fort Brown. One of the most persistent seems to be someone in a white coat such as was worn by medical personnel of the military in the late eighteen hundreds.

When the building was still empty, before the College moved in, city folks would talk about strange appearances in the former Fort. One of these appearances is described as a tall man in a white coat worn over his uniform, possibly a medical doctor. Incidents, although sometimes years apart, are usually described in a similar fashion and seem to happen at times during the year when the building is occupied late in the evenings or at night. That usually

happens when documents have to be developed for the Legislature or other agencies.

In the evening, after dark has set in, the doctor seems to be in one of the offices on the left side of the building. Candles seem to be lit and the shadow of the doctor can be seen in the windows. The door to that specific office is usually closed, but flickering light is seen under the door. When office personnel try to open the door it seems locked. Naturally, the office personnel believe that the current occupant is in his office and does not want to be disturbed. But when that occupant happens to enter through the front door and then proceeds to his office that is no longer locked, some of the personnel react angrily, believing that they are being made fun of by their superiors.

At other times the door of that office is open, when suddenly some light seems to come on, and a man in a white coat over an olive-green uniform is seen passing by the open door, even moving through the desk which is in his way. If someone dares to go toward that office, they find the door shut and no light shining under the door. People coming from the outside have also observed the figure inside the windows, even through the closed shutters. Naturally they are told that nobody is in that office when they ask. Quite often someone can be heard walking through the building on wooden floors that no longer exist. The strange thing is that some people have heard the walking, others have seen the doctor, and others experienced both. At least at one time, a secretary preferred to quit after having been exposed to the appearance, although she would not admit having seen or heard anything or having been afraid. It is also astonishing that some employees will admit having had strange experiences, but will refuse to go into details.

The Protestant Presence in Cameron County, Texas: 1850-1870 An Examination of the Census Data

by

J. Steven Rice

There is general agreement among American church historians that Protestant organizations in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century experienced exceptional numerical growth.[1] This period in American history is often referred to as the Second Great Awakening, and lasted from 1801 until the 1850s. During this time, the eastern seaboard, as well as the frontier regions, were inundated with a spirit of religious revival carried out by Protestant itinerant evangelists. These traveling ministers went throughout the western states and territories delivering a message of personal salvation and organizing believers into congregations. Statistics indicate that the Baptists and Methodists were most successful with regard to numeric growth. Research by Roger Finke and Rodney Stark concludes that the Baptists and Methodists grew because their organizations were more easily adaptable to the frontier environment.[2] The decentralized nature of denominational organization and the flexibility with regard to formal education of the evangelists provided a freedom that was conducive to the frontier lifestyle. As a result, the Baptists and Methodists had fewer encumbrances than other Protestant denominations that were less flexible.[3]

In 1848, at the end of the Second Great Awakening, the United States and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that added South Texas, the New Mexico Territory, and California to the United States. This land, previously Roman Catholic in religious identity, was now opened to American Protestantism. Would Protestant organizations have the same success in these new territories that they had in regions farther to the north and

east a few years earlier? The purpose of this study is to analyze the early presence of Protestantism in Cameron County, Texas, by examining the census records from 1850 through 1870. This period is significant because, for the first time, the U.S. Census Bureau included data from Texas, New Mexico, and California. Using the census records from 1850 to 1870, this study will compare the growth rate of Protestant organizations within Cameron County. The study will then compare the Protestant growth rate in Cameron County to other border counties in Texas, the New Mexico Territory, and in California, newly acquired land that was previously possessed by Mexico and had a predominantly Roman Catholic religious culture. From 1850 to 1870, census data included only the number of church buildings, seating capacity, and value of church property. The census takers did not include the same information in the 1880 census. In this study, Protestant organizational growth will be measured by the number of church buildings and the total seating capacity listed in the census for each organization. The obvious problem is that seats do not constitute actual members. The census data from 1850 to 1870 does not account for individual church practices regarding "membership." However, counting "members" is also problematic since Protestant denominations are not uniform in their membership requirements. For example, Baptists do not practice infant baptism and therefore do not count infants and young children as members. Other denominations count children or have a separate category for counting attending non-members. Despite the shortcomings, the existence of buildings and seats indicate that a particular body of people are present in a given area or region. The census takers recognized this and used the criteria to get a rough estimation of religious presence. The number of buildings and seating capacity was the method used by the census takers in 1850, 1860, and 1870 and is the basis of this study.[4]

Protestantism in this study will be limited to the organizations that were present in all of the 32 states in 1850. These groups include the Baptists, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians.[5]

According to the census data, Congregational and Lutheran organizations were growing during this period, but the overall numbers do not compare to the other four organizations. Due to the close proximity of Cameron County to Mexico and the Catholic influence in the region, Roman Catholicism will also be considered as it relates to the growth of Protestant organizations in the region.

Cameron County, Texas, has a unique history and geographical location. It lies at the southern tip of Texas, bordered on the south by Mexico. From 1836 to 1848, the land between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande was disputed territory, first between Mexico and the Republic of Texas and later between Mexico and the United States. It became the focus of the Mexican War. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 legally made this territory the possession of the United States and of the state of Texas.[6] The close relationship of this region with Mexican Catholicism is essential for understanding Protestant presence and growth.

The next section will include background information on the revival movement on the American frontier. It will be followed by statistical data from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 censuses. The growth of Protestantism in Cameron County will be compared to national and state growth as well as growth in the new lands acquired by the United States after the signing of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty in 1848.

Background

In the years following the American War of Independence, settlers who had been confined to the east coast of the United States began to move west. This movement made its way south to the Mississippi Valley and eventually north and west. By 1850, settlers reached the west coast. Protestant religion was a part of the westward movement.[7]

At the beginning of the westward movement, a religious revival began in the United States that is sometimes referred to as the Second Great Awakening. Noll calls this movement "the most influential revival of Christianity in the history of the United States."[8] Its beginnings can be traced to Logan, Kentucky, where, in 1797, a Presbyterian, James McGready, and his congregation began to seek a deeper religious experience. The spirit of religious revival became evident among other churches in the region also. In 1801, a large camp meeting at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, attracted thousands of settlers. The revival was accompanied by physical phenomena such as jerks, singing, laughing, and barking.[9] Cane Ridge spawned more camp meetings that spread throughout the western territories. Some were characterized by emotional zeal while others were more controlled. Meetings were held in open fields, cabins, and theaters. Itinerant ministers were commonly present.[10] Preaching emphasized universal redemption, free full salvation, justification by faith, the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and the belief in personal sin.[11]

While the Presbyterians started the camp meeting movement, the Methodists and Baptists greatly benefited from the concept. The Methodists were especially adept at organization. Settlers placed their tents around a central location, allowing the preacher to communicate more effectively. They also emphasized the singing of hymns. Both Methodists and Baptists employed circuit riders who, for little or no pay, rode from settlement to settlement preaching a message of personal salvation and organizing converts into congregations. These itinerant preachers usually had little formal education.[12]

The Second Great Awakening took place not only on the frontier, but also on the east coast. In 1795, students at Yale University, under the presidency of Timothy Dwight, experienced a similar spiritual awakening. By 1802, one half of the students at Yale reported having a personal conversion experience. Similar experiences were reported at two Presbyterian schools in Virginia beginning in 1797.[13]

Revivalism set the religious tone for the period from 1800 to 1850. During this time, the various denominations responded in differing ways. As stated, the Baptists and Methodists, taking advantage of the frontier climate, were very successful and became the two fastest growing organizations during this period. Finke and Stark have estimated the numerical growth rates of the five denominations from 1776 to 1850. According to their findings, the Methodists made up only 2.5% of all religious adherents in 1776. By 1850, the Methodists were the largest denomination in the United States, with 2,697,751 members, making up 34.2% of the total number of religious adherents.[14] The Baptists increased from 16.9% in 1776 to 20.5% of total religious adherents in 1850, with a total membership of 1,602,323.[15]

The 1989 study by Finke and Stark concludes that Baptist and Methodist growth was largely due to their ability to adapt to the American frontier environment. Both had democratic aspects to their church polity. Baptists had always taken pride in their independence and willingness to allow each congregation to govern itself. Circuit riders were thus free to establish local congregations with little concern for centralized decision making. Methodists, while clinging to the hierarchical structures of church polity as an organization, were not so constrained on the American frontier. Like the Baptists, Methodist circuit riders were free to establish congregations with local leadership. Methodist growth did not cease until the end of the century, when the circuit riders gave way to professional clergy that were more committed to the traditional forms of church government.[16]

Lack of formal education on the part of the ministers was also an asset on the frontier. Baptist and Methodist itinerants were common people, unencumbered by the social status of formal education.[17] Their commonality with the people they encountered made their message credible. Those they recruited locally to lead the congregations often made a living as farmers and teachers.[18]

In contrast to the Baptists and Methodists, the Presbyterians and Episcopalians experienced moderate growth during this period, but lost ground overall. The Presbyterians declined from 19.0% of total religious adherents in 1776 to 11.6% in 1850 (905,675 total adherents). Episcopalians fell from 15.7% to 3.5% (273.727).[19] Finke and Stark attribute this drop in influence to the lack of "market" appeal and the inability to adapt in a religiously free context.[20]

The United States and Texas

Table 1 (see the end of the article) provides the national growth rate percentages of four Protestant organizations and the Roman Catholics in terms of the number of buildings and total seating capacity within each organization. Column *7* offers a comparison of the overall growth rate percentages of buildings and total seating capacity for all five religious organizations. In every case, Protestant organizations as well as the Roman Catholics show significant growth over the period of 1850 to 1870. What is most apparent is that the greatest growth percentages, with regard to buildings and seating capacity, was taking place among the Roman Catholics. This is an indication that the zenith of the Second Great Awakening had passed. However, Column 5 indicates clearly that in terms of total seating capacity, the Methodists were far outdistancing their counterparts in 1870. Column *4* provides the growth rate percentages from 1850 to 1860. During the same period, Methodists show the greatest total seating capacity. The percentage of building increase among the Episcopalians is comparable to that of the Methodists but pales in comparison to the overall seating capacity. Returning to Column 5, the growth rate of Methodist buildings decreased, while the Baptists showed slightly greater gains from 1860 to 1870. The overall figures from 1850 to 1870 indicate that although the Methodists and Episcopalians show impressive increases in the number of facilities, the Baptists and Methodists still continued to outdistance the others in terms of total seating capacity.[21] However, the most significant increases in Table 1 are among the Roman Catholics. Roman Catholic

places of worship tripled in overall numbers, and their seating capacity grew by nearly 50%. The next table will compare how each organization increased in Texas during the same period.

Table 2 (see the end of the article) measures the growth rate of the total number of buildings and seating capacity of the four Protestant organizations and the Roman Catholics in the state of Texas from 1850 to 1870. As in the national statistics, there was an overall increase in the total number of Protestant and Roman Catholic buildings and total seating capacity in Texas from 1850 to 1870. The Episcopalians show the highest percentage growth rate with regard to the number of facilities and seating capacity. However, they show far fewer seats overall than the Baptists and Methodists. Presbyterians also have high percentage rates in terms of facilities. What is most significant is the sharp decrease in the growth rate of both the Baptists and Methodists from 1860 to 1870. It has been suggested that the Civil War may have influenced the decrease in the number of Baptist and Methodist organizations in the South. Methodist historian Frederick Norwood points out that, after 1862, Union soldiers occupied much of the South. Methodist ministers were scattered, and the Methodist publishing company in Nashville, Tennessee, was closed. There was no General Conference of Southern Methodists in 1862. As a result, Methodist membership in the South declined.[22] Norwood may be correct in his evaluation of the Civil War period itself (1861-1865). However, over the decade, from 1860 to 1870, the census records indicate that only a few southern congregations of the Baptists and Methodists were lost.[23] Overall, however, Column 5 clearly indicates that from 1860 to 1870, Methodists and Baptists still easily outnumbered the other religious organizations in Texas.

Cameron County

The land that later became Cameron County was settled by the Spaniards in the 1700s. By 1765, a small community, San Juan de los Esteros (today Matamoros), was established on the south side of the Rio Grande. Beginning in 1781, land grants on the north side

of the Rio Grande were awarded to various landowners. Much of this land today is Cameron County. All of the land, both north and south of the river, was a part of the Mexican State of Tamaulipas, which extended north to the Nueces River. The area north of the Rio Grande was the subject of heated debate after Texas achieved its independence from Mexico in 1836. Mexico claimed what had historically been the northern section of Tamaulipas that extended north of the Rio Grande to the Nueces River. Texas claimed as its territory the land extending south of the Nueces to the Rio Grande, citing the 1836 Treaty of Velasco, signed by Mexican President Santa Anna but never officially approved by the Mexican government. After Texas was annexed in 1845, United States troops occupied the disputed territory, an act that initiated the Mexican War in 1846. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in 1848, officially made South Texas, extending from the Nueces river south to the Rio Grande, a part of the United States. On February 12, 1848, a few months prior to the signing of the treaty, the Texas legislature declared the 3,308 square miles south of the Nueces River as Cameron County.[24]

Before examining the religious data in Cameron County, it is essential to understand that the borders of Cameron County changed dramatically between 1850 and 1860.[25] The 1850 Census listed Cameron, Starr, and Webb counties together, combining the data for the three counties. By 1860, Cameron, Starr, and Webb counties were treated as separate entities. By 1860, two other counties, Hidalgo and Zapata, were added to the census count. Therefore, in 1860, there was census data collected from five South Texas counties, when previously, in 1850, all of the data in the region was listed under Cameron, Starr, and Webb counties combined. This is significant when considering the overall population of Cameron County. The 1850 Census lists the total population of Cameron, Starr and Webb counties at 8,541. In 1860, the population of Cameron County (apart from the other four counties) was 6,028, which indicates a decline in total population. However, the combined population of Starr, Webb,

and the two additional counties, Hidalgo and Zapata, in 1860, was 6,243. If this data is accurate, the aggregate population of the five counties increased from 8,541 in 1850 to 14,784 in 1860, an increase of 73%. Over the next ten years there was little significant change in the borders of Cameron County. The 1870 Census listed Cameron County's total population at 10,999. Up from 6,028 in 1860, the data indicates that Cameron County's total population increased by 82%. The high increase in population in Cameron County between 1860 and 1870 was matched by the other four South Texas counties: Starr – 72%, Webb – 87%, Hidalgo – 100%, and Zapata – 19%.

There is no indication from the census data that the numerical growth of Cameron County from 1850 to 1870 translated into increased Protestant presence in the area. It becomes apparent after a brief scan of the census data that Cameron County does not conform to the national or state averages where Protestant growth is concerned from 1850 to 1870.

Table 3 (see the end of the article) clearly indicates that Protestantism was new to Cameron County, and had not yet seen substantial growth. However, the data contained in **Table 4** presents some interesting questions that will require qualitative research to answer. Most relevant to this study is that the census gives no indication that there was a Baptist congregation in Cameron County during the period from 1850 to 1870. It can be concluded that the Baptists had not yet arrived in this region of the country or had so few adherents that they were not yet organized into congregations.

The 1850 and 1860 censuses note the existence of one Methodist congregation. However, that congregation does not appear in 1870. Two other Protestant organizations were also present in Cameron County during this period. Table 3 indicates that one Presbyterian congregation appeared in 1850. A second appeared in 1860. Like the Methodist congregation, the two Presbyterian congregations disappeared from the census records in 1870. The

1860 and 1870 censuses also noted the existence of an Episcopal congregation. The greatest mystery in this study is that the 1870 Census records the existence of one Congregational building with a seating capacity of 500 in Cameron County. According to the 1870 Census, this was the only Congregational building in the entire state of Texas. At this time, there is no known explanation for the existence of a Protestant organization of that size in 1870.[26] In contrast to the limited presence of Protestantism in Cameron County during this period is the impressive growth of Roman Catholicism in terms of both buildings and seating capacity.

Several questions must be addressed. First, what happened in the 1860s that caused the disappearance of one Methodist and two Presbyterian buildings along with the seating capacity of the Episcopal building? As early as 1849, residents in the city of Brownsville were interested in establishing a Protestant congregation. The first Protestant organization in Cameron County was Presbyterian, and was established by Rev. Hiram Chamberlain in 1850. The congregation had no permanent structure. Instead they met on a riverboat that also served as Chamberlain's home. In the same year, Methodists, led by Rev. Nehemiah Cravens, also established a congregation. In 1851, an Episcopal congregation was meeting in a building donated by a Polish immigrant, Alexander Werbiski. By 1854, the Episcopalians had a permanent structure called the Church of the Advent.[27] The 1860 Census cites the existence of these three Protestant organizations. A major hurricane struck the region in October 1867. W. H. Chatfield, in his 1893 description of Brownsville, Texas, stated that the hurricane destroyed the Presbyterian and Episcopal buildings.[28] Wooldridge and Vezzetti add that the Presbyterians rebuilt and dedicated a new building in 1869, while the Episcopalians did the same 1877.[29] The hurricane explains why the buildings and seating capacity disappeared, but does not explain why there is an Episcopal congregation in 1870 while no Presbyterian congregation appears in the same census. It is possible that the Episcopalians were meeting regularly in a particular place, while

the Presbyterians were not meeting at the time when the census takers were gathering their information.

Chilton contends that the disappearance of the Methodist building was due to a shortage of ministers during and after the Civil War. In 1864, the Methodist congregation disbanded. Its members were absorbed into the Presbyterian congregation. No Methodist pastor was sent to Cameron County again until 1904.[30]

Secondary sources also point out a number of other factors that may have hindered the increase of new church buildings. In 1867, preceding the hurricane, Cameron County experienced an unusually cold winter in which snow was seen for the first time since 1835. The harsh winter was followed by a yellow fever epidemic in the summer that killed approximately one third of the population in Brownsville. In October, the hurricane arrived that killed more people, and severely damaged a number of structures.[31] These natural disasters would have been detrimental to new building projects in the late 1860s.

In addition to natural disasters, violence was not uncommon in Cameron County during this period. Most notable was the Cortina War in which Juan Nepomuceno Cortina led raids across the Rio Grande seeking revenge on those who had abused Mexican residents of Texas after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, Cortina raided ranches on the American side of the Rio Grande, hoping that the land would one day be repossessed by Mexico.[32] The community instability and destruction caused by the Cortina raids would do little to motivate residents to begin building projects.

Second, why did the Protestant organizations not experience the same overall increase in Cameron County that was experienced on the frontier farther north? The geographical location of Cameron County must be considered as a factor in Protestant growth in the region. Although the population was growing, Cameron County was a stopping place for people migrating to the California gold fields.[33] Many Anglo migrants were passing through the area not

intending to stay. In contrast, the native population was made up largely of Mexicans (only recently becoming Americans) who were a part of the Roman Catholic tradition and had little interest in changing religious affiliations.

More importantly, Protestants who arrived in Cameron County during this period encountered an aggressive Roman Catholic Church. The Protestants not only found the inhabitants to be professing Catholics, but they also arrived when the Catholics were experiencing a revival of their own. Cruz and Cruz explain that Spanish Catholic missionaries had been present among the Indians in the region as early as the sixteenth century. In the mid-eighteenth century, Spanish Catholic colonists settled in the region. After the end of the Mexican War, in 1848, the Lower Rio Grande Valley, including Cameron County, came under the Diocese of Galveston. In the same year, a crude wooden church was built in Brownsville.[34] One year later, in 1849, five Oblate Fathers, led by Father Alexander Soulerin, arrived in Cameron County and began the "pony" ranch ministry. These Catholic priests traveled daily on horseback from Brownsville throughout Cameron County, providing the sacraments to those Catholics who lived on the ranches. By the 1860s, the Oblate Fathers had established a united Catholic ministry throughout the entire Rio Grande Valley. This aggressive ministry was prompted in part by the perceived demise of Catholicism in Texas, after 1845, due to the arrival of southern Protestants.[35] When the Presbyterians and Methodists arrived in 1849 and the Episcopalians in 1851,[36] the "pony" ministry was beginning. The Oblate Fathers, from 1850 to 1870, were essentially doing in Cameron County what the itinerant Protestant evangelists were doing on the frontier farther north. Catholicism was the religion of the South Texas frontier that was carried to the people by Catholic itinerant evangelists.

Other Texas Counties

Table 3 indicates that Catholic congregations and seating capacity in Cameron County increased from 1850 to 1870. However, the

1870 Census indicates that there were no additional Catholic structures built in the 1860s and that seating capacity increased by only 150. This slowdown in growth may have been due to the hurricane of 1867. The hurricane devastated the Episcopal and Presbyterian buildings but only damaged the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Brownsville.[37] The 1850 Census records the presence of three Catholic buildings in Cameron, Starr, and Webb counties. In 1860, when the census reflected the realignment of the region into 5 counties, census data records the presence of a Catholic facility in Starr County (800 seats) and another in Webb County (500 seats). The same data reappears in 1870. No Protestant church appears in any of the other four South Texas counties in the 1860 or 1870 census. Four additional Catholic buildings appear in 1860 and again in 1870, in Cameron County alone. Although the number of Catholic buildings in Cameron County increased by only one, the total seating capacity rose from 500 in 1850 to 1200 in 1870. The average seating capacity of each Catholic congregation was 300 in 1870. The total population was 10,999. If this data is correct, the Catholic buildings could seat nearly 11% of the total population of Cameron County all at once in 1870.

Other South Texas counties on or near the border with Mexico show little or no evidence of Protestant presence according to the census data from 1850 to 1870. As mentioned earlier, there were no Protestant churches located in the four border counties north and west of Cameron County (Hidalgo, Starr, Zapata, Webb). Census takers recorded both Starr and Webb counties as having one Roman Catholic building each. Far to the Northwest, El Paso County, with a population of 3,671, had one Methodist building, with a seating capacity of 300 in 1870. No other Protestant organizations appear in the record. In the same year, two Roman Catholic buildings are listed in El Paso County according to the census data. The total seating capacity for the two churches combined is 1,000. If the data is correct, the Roman Catholic

buildings in El Paso County in 1870 could seat almost 37% of the entire population at one time.

Nueces County, with its largest city, Corpus Christi, is located directly north of Cameron County. Like Cameron County, it is situated on the Gulf of Mexico and has a port city. According to the census data, there was no Baptist or Episcopal organization listed in Nueces County from 1850 to 1870. The 1850 census records the presence of one Methodist building, with a seating capacity of 400, which increased to 500 in the 1870 census. By 1870, the Methodists were joined by one Presbyterian building, with a seating capacity of 300. There was one Roman Catholic building in Nueces County listed in the 1860 census, that had 700 seats, which increased to 800 seats in 1870. The census data suggests that there was a more substantial presence of Protestants in Nueces County than in Cameron County by 1870. Like Cameron County and the other border counties, there is no record of a Baptist organization in Nueces County in the census records by 1870.

Farther north, along the Gulf coast, Galveston County, like Cameron and Nueces, had a principle port city, Galveston, which was a major port of entry from 1850 to 1870. Galveston County was formed in 1838, shortly after Texas received its independence from Mexico. From 1850 to 1870, census data records that Galveston grew from 4,529 to 15,290 in total population.

Unlike Cameron County, Galveston County had a sizeable Protestant presence from 1850 to 1870 with regard to seating capacity. However, growth in the number of buildings and seating capacity was sporadic not only for the Protestants but for the Roman Catholics as well. From 1850 to 1860, the Baptist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches showed declines in total seating capacity. Methodists showed a slight increase. Apparently, Episcopalians were only beginning to form, not appearing in the 1850 Census. By 1860, there was one Episcopal building with 1600 seats. However, from 1860 to 1870, seating capacity in the Episcopal building dropped 25%. The Presbyterians were showing

no gain over the same period. Overall, only the Methodists were showing significant increases in seating capacity by 1870. The most significant comparison between Cameron and Galveston counties during this period is that the Roman Catholic Church in Galveston was showing only a slight increase in seating capacity in 1870 after a huge loss from 1850 to 1860, unlike the increases that were taking place in Cameron, Nueces, and the other Texas counties located along the Texas-Mexican border.

Bexar County is situated slightly northwest of Cameron and Nueces counties and directly west of Galveston County. Its largest city, San Antonio, had an established Catholic Community that dated to 1731, when Franciscan friars established four missions in the area. That same year, La Villa de San Fernando was built by immigrants from the Canary Islands.[38] According to the census data, Bexar County's total population grew from 6,052 in 1850 to 14,454 in 1860. By 1870, the population reached 16,043. Matovina's research concludes that Roman Catholics far outnumbered their Protestant neighbors in 1860.[39] This is also reflected in the census data.

Table 5 (see the end of the article) lists the total number of buildings and seating capacity of the four Protestant organizations as well as that of the Roman Catholics in Bexar County, Texas from 1850 to 1870. Like Cameron County, there were no Baptist buildings in Bexar County from 1850 to 1870, according to the census data. In 1850, the census lists one Presbyterian building with a seating capacity of 500. By 1860, it is joined by one Episcopal and one Methodist congregation, the three combining for a total seating capacity of 530. By 1870, the census indicates that the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian seating capacity had all increased. The decline in Presbyterian seating capacity from 500 in 1850 to 150 in 1860 was probably due to the loss of two very prominent Presbyterian missionaries in 1849. An anti-Protestant backlash on the part of the Catholic community led to the exit of at least one of the two Presbyterians. Matovina indicates that a permanent Presbyterian minister did not arrive in San Antonio until 1856.[40] Any loss of Presbyterian momentum would have been reflected in

the 1860 Census. By 1870, however, the census records that the Presbyterians had two congregations, with a total seating capacity of 600. Unlike the national average, but consistent with the trends in the state of Texas, Baptists and Methodists had a minimal presence in Bexar County from 1850 to 1870. The census data does not record the presence of a Baptist organization during this period, although Matovina states that a congregation was formed in 1861.[41] It is not clear why the 1870 Census did not record its existence. Methodists were present in Bexar County, but they were not able to match the growth of the Episcopalians. The census data reveals that there was a growing Protestant presence in Bexar County during this period, although in overall seating capacity, the Roman Catholics were still dominant. Matovina adds that there was resistance on the part of Tejanos in Bexar County toward Protestantism, indicating that Protestant interest was more on the part of those migrating from the east. Like Cameron County, Bexar County Catholics were careful to protect their Roman Catholic heritage.[42]

The census data indicates so far that the Texas counties located closer to the Texas-Mexican border from 1850 to 1870 showed very little Protestant presence compared to the counties north of the Nueces River. Roman Catholic presence in the same areas was greater, although overall numbers were not staggering. Of the Texas counties studied, only Galveston County showed a decline in Roman Catholic seating capacity from 1850 to 1870. The census data indicates that the Methodists were usually the first Protestant organization to appear in Texas counties that were predominantly Roman Catholic.

The New Mexico and California Counties

Census data is sparse regarding the New Mexico Territory, which in 1848 included all of the present area of New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. The 1850 census lists religious data from seven counties in the New Mexico Territory. The census does not record the presence of any Protestant building or

seating accommodations. By contrast, the 1850 Census records the existence of 73 Roman Catholic buildings, with a total seating capacity of 28,650 in the New Mexico Territory. By 1860, the census reports the first appearance of Protestants in the area. Of the ten New Mexico counties recorded in the 1860 Census, three had Baptist church buildings with a total seating capacity of 650. No other Protestant organizations are listed. Again, by contrast, the 1860 Census lists a total of 97 Roman Catholic buildings, with a total seating capacity of 78,750. Total seating capacity in Roman Catholic buildings increased 175.8% over the ten-year period. The 1860 census also included Utah, which had been a part of the New Mexico Territory ten years earlier. The Utah Territory census in 1860 did not record the presence of any Roman Catholic buildings or traditional Protestant organizations. In contrast, the census reveals the existence of 21 Mormon buildings with a total seating capacity of 12,950 in nine counties. By 1870, the census records 152 Roman Catholic buildings with a total seating capacity of 80,710 in the New Mexico Territory. Protestants showed slightly higher numbers than previously but there was no significant increase. Baptists had one building (down from 3 in 1860) with a seating capacity of 300. The census records three Episcopal buildings, but does not give the number of seats. One Methodist building, with 300 seats, existed, according to the 1870 Census. Presbyterians also had one building with 250 seats. The 19 counties in Utah again do not report the existence of any Roman Catholic buildings. However, the 1870 Census records one Episcopal building with 400 seats and one Methodist building with 300 seats in Salt Lake County. One additional Episcopal building was recorded in Box Elder County that had 60 seats. By contrast, there were 160 Mormon buildings with a total seating capacity of 85,350 in the Utah territory in 1870. The census data indicates clearly that, as in Cameron County, Texas, Protestantism was only beginning to appear in the New Mexico Territory during this period.

Roman Catholic presence in California dates to 1769, when Father Junípero Serra led a group of Franciscan missionaries

and started the San Diego de Alcalá Mission. Their goal was to evangelize the Indians. Over the next 15 years, the Franciscans established 21 missions in California. Ahlstrom reports that close to 100,000 Indians were baptized by Franciscan monks between 1769 and 1845.[43] Like South Texas and the New Mexico Territory, California became a possession of the United States in 1848 as a result of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty. Two years later, in 1850, it received statehood. California's southernmost county, the only county bordering Mexico in 1850, was San Diego County. Like Cameron County, Texas, in 1850, San Diego County, California, was much larger in area (approx. 40,000 sq. miles) than it is today. It shared a border with Mariposa County to the north and with Los Angeles County to the northwest. Farther northwest, on the Pacific coastline, were Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. The 1850 Census records no church buildings, Catholic or Protestant, in San Diego County. In the six-county region, the census data reports three Roman Catholic buildings in Los Angeles County, with a total seating capacity of 1,500, and six more Roman Catholic structures in Santa Barbara, with a total of 3,800 seats. There is no record of any Protestant organization in the region in 1850 according to the census data.

By 1860, San Diego County was divided and greatly reduced in size. San Bernardino County was created from the northern region of San Diego County. Farther to the north, Mariposa County was reduced to a very small county that was far removed from the borders of its former neighboring counties. The other counties changed slightly. The 1860 Census reveals the existence of four Roman Catholic buildings in San Diego County with 1,800 seats. Likewise, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties show a total of 13 Roman Catholic structures, with a total seating capacity of 6,450. The 1860 Census also records what appears to be the first Protestant buildings in Southern California. Los Angeles County recorded a Methodist building with 300 seats and a Congregational building with 200 seats. San Bernardino County listed one Methodist building with

200 seats and one Baptist building with 200 seats. There were no Protestant churches listed in San Diego County in the 1860 Census. By 1870, the presence of Protestantism in Southern California was more substantial.

New to the 1870 Census was Kern County, which was created from the western section of San Bernardino County and eastern Los Angeles County. The 1870 Census indicates that Protestants had arrived in Southern California, although their overall numbers pale in comparison to that of the Roman Catholics. As seen previously, the Methodists were the most prolific of the Protestant organizations. They were present in all of the Southern California counties in 1870. Consistent with the statistics from South Texas and New Mexico, the Roman Catholics far outnumber the Protestants in the number of buildings and total seating capacity. The oddity of this table is that San Diego County in 1870 listed the Roman Catholics as having 10,000 total seats and the Methodists as having 2,000 total seats when the census lists the entire county as having only 4,951 inhabitants. Closer examination of the 1870 Census reveals that Indians living on reservations were not counted in the 1860 or 1870 censuses in California. The 1870 Census says that 17,798 Indians were not included in the census data in California.[44] The absence of the Indian reservation population in the 1870 census accounts for the difference between the total church seating capacity and the total population in San Diego County in 1870. The point remains that Protestant presence in Southern California was not keeping pace with the Roman Catholics in numbers of church structures or in total seating capacity from 1850 to 1870.

Like Cameron County, San Diego County shows little Protestant presence from 1850 to 1870. Also like the South Texas counties that shared a border with Mexico, Protestantism in the Southern California counties was not showing the same increases that were seen in the Northern California counties. San Francisco County increased in total population from 56,802 in 1860 to 149,473 in 1870.[45] The 1870 Census reported 14 Methodist buildings with a

total seating capacity of 5,750 in San Francisco County. The other three Protestant organizations all had seating capacities exceeding 4,000. Consistent with the Southern California counties in 1870, Roman Catholic facilities and seating capacity outnumbered the Protestant organizations. The census listed San Francisco County as having 19 Roman Catholic structures with a total seating capacity of 21,000. In Sacramento County, however, the Protestant presence is far stronger. The 1870 Census reported Sacramento County as having 26,830 total inhabitants. Methodists again outnumbered the other Protestant organizations with eight buildings and a total seating capacity of 2,600. Baptists had 1,200 total seats and the Episcopalians had 900. Oddly, there was no Presbyterian presence recorded in Sacramento County in the 1870 census. In contrast to San Francisco and the Southern California counties, Sacramento listed only four Catholic structures and a total seating capacity of 1,600 in the 1870 Census.

How did Protestant presence in Cameron County Texas compare to Northern California counties of similar size in population? Cameron County, Texas, had a population of 10,999 according to the 1870 Census. The same census lists four California counties with populations between 10,000 and 12,000: Butte (11,403), El Dorado (10,309), Placer (11,357), and Yuba (10,851). All four counties were located in north central California, near Sacramento County. It is also noteworthy that these counties are located where many were settling in their search for gold in the 1850s and 1860s. Some probably passed through Cameron County, Texas on their journey west.

Table 7 (see the end of the article) suggests that in these four northern California counties in 1870 there was a far greater Protestant presence with regard to seating capacity than there was in Southern California or in the Texas border counties in the same year. Methodist seating capacity was greater that that of the Catholics in all four counties. In El Dorado and Placer counties, the Methodists show almost twice as many seats as that of the Catholics in the same counties. Although they are

similar in population size, there is little comparison between these counties and Cameron County, Texas, where Protestant presence was almost non-existent in 1870. However, it is noteworthy that, like Cameron County, there were no Baptist buildings in any of these counties according to the 1870 Census. Methodists, as seen throughout this study, continue to be the most evident Protestant organization throughout South Texas, the New Mexico Territory, and California. The only exception is that the Baptists and Episcopalians had slightly higher numbers in the New Mexico territory in 1870.

Conclusion

Quantitative research often raises more questions that it answers. Numbers and percentages tend to be cold, impersonal, and sometimes inconsistent. Census data offers statistical tendencies but does not explain the reasons why events take place. Yet, studying numbers can also be the best way to standardize research. Religious presence in a particular region is a good example. Comparing the numbers of buildings and seats offers uniform criteria for measuring the presence of diverse religious organizations that have different standards regarding membership. Counting individual people in a given area can become extremely complicated especially in times of mass migration.

Overall, the census data from 1850 to 1870 indicates that Catholicism was well established in South Texas, the New Mexico Territory, and California in total number of structures and seating capacity. The Baptists, who had made such great gains during the Second Great Awakening, were hardly evident in the lands added to the United States in 1848. Methodists were the most evident Protestant organization in the same region over the same period. The census data indicates that Protestant organizations were scarce in counties closer to the United States Mexican border, compared to counties further north from 1850 to 1870.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the early presence of Protestantism in Cameron County, Texas, from 1850 to 1870,

using the United States census data. Texas was first included in the United States census data in 1850, having been annexed in 1845. It becomes immediately evident that Protestant groups were just beginning to make their presence felt in the region. The census did not record any Baptist organizations in Cameron County during this period. The only Methodist church on record during this period closed in 1864, and was not reopened until 1904.

Four factors appear to have hindered the growth of Protestant congregations and seating capacity in Cameron County from 1850 to 1870. First, Protestant organizations were beginning at a time when there was a special effort on the part of the Roman Catholics to unify and renew Catholicism in South Texas. The "pony" ranch ministry of the Oblate Fathers was a strategy very similar to the itinerant Protestant evangelists on the frontier to the north. The increase in the number of Catholic buildings and seating capacity from 1850 to 1870 appears to be directly related to this evangelistic effort. The religion of the Anglo Protestant immigrants probably had little appeal to the Mexican American ranch workers whose traditional religion was Catholicism.

Second, the harsh winter, the smallpox epidemic, and the hurricane of 1867 reduced the Brownsville population and destroyed buildings and seating capacity. The hurricane destroyed at least two Protestant buildings. Natural disasters destroyed buildings and seats. The Presbyterians and Episcopalians recovered, but evidently not before the census takers made their count. At least one Roman Catholic structure was damaged but not destroyed, and therefore continued to be included in the census count.

Third, the fact that the Methodist church was closed due to a shortage of Methodist ministers indicates that the Civil War did have a detrimental effect on Protestant organizations with southern affiliations. It is possible that more Protestant congregations would have been established at a greater rate had it not been for the war.

Fourth, Cameron County from 1850 to 1870 was not a very stable community. Although there were nearly 11,000 inhabitants in 1870, many of those arriving in Brownsville were not intending to stay. Thousands passed through the area on their way to California to search for gold. Violence was also common. The Cortina Wars and the violent responses to them did not make Cameron County an attractive place in the late nineteenth century. Structures and seating capacity are usually signs of stability.

It must be said that the uniqueness of Cameron County makes it incomparable to the rest of the United States in many ways. Concerning religion and the revival movement, the disputed nationality of the region prior to 1850 plays an important role. Longtime residents in the region were born and raised in the Catholic religion. The shift in the region from Mexican to American hands does not mean that the religion would change, especially since Mexico had been historically closed to foreign religions. The zeal of the Oblate Fathers made sure that the inhabitants of the region would not change religions. The census does not help in this area since it did not distinguish between the Anglo and Mexican-American population with regard to religion. Overall, it is clear that Protestant religion in Cameron County was in its initial stages, and had not yet reached a period of substantial growth.

South Texas College, McAllen

Table 1

National Religious Growth Rate 1850-1870[46]

of Buildings/Seating Capacity, Growth %

Organization	1850	1860	Growth %	1870	Growth %	Total Growth %
Baptist	9,375/ 3,247,029	11,221/ 3,749,553	+19.6% +15.4%	12,857/ 3,997,116	+14.5% +6.6%	+37.1% +23.1%
Episcopal	1,450/ 643,598	2,145/ 847,296	+47.9% +20.3%	2,601/ 991,051	+21.2% +16.9%	+79.3% +53.9%
Methodist	13,280/ 4,343,579	19,883/ 6,259,799	+49.7% +44.1%	21,337/ 6,528,029	+7.3% +4.2%	+60.6% +50.2%
Presbyterian	4,824/ 2,079,690	5,061/ 2,088,838	+4.9% +0.4%	5,683/ 2,198,900	+12.2% +5.2%	+17.8% +5.7%
Roman Catholic	1,221/ 667,823	2,550/ 1,404,437	+108.8% +110.3%	3,806/ 1,000,514	+49.2% -28.7%	+211.7% +49.8%

Table 2

Texas Religious Growth Rate 1850-1870[47]

of Buildings/Seating Capacity, Growth %

Organization	1850	1860	Growth %	1870	Growth %	Total Growth %
Baptist	82/ 10,680	280/ 77,435	+241.4% +625%	275/ 61,700	-1.7% -20.3%	+235.3% +477.7%
Episcopal	5/ 1,025	19/ 8,480	+280% +727.3%	32/ 11,400	+68.4% +34.4%	+540% +1012.1%
Methodist	176/ 33,045	410/ 103,799	+132.9% +214.1%	355/ 69,100	-13.4% -33.4%	+101.7% +109.1%
Presbyterian	45/ 8,320	72/ 19,067	+60% +129.1%	101/ 27,600	+40.2% +44.7%	+124.4% +231.7%
Roman Catholic	13/ 6,760	33/ 12,772	+153.8% +88.9%	36/ 16,000	+9% +25.2%	+176.9% +136.6%

Table 3

Cameron County, Texas Religious Growth Rate 1850-1870

of Buildings/Seating Capacity, Growth %

Organization	1850	1860	Growth %	1870	Growth %	Total Growth %
Baptist	-	-	-	-	-	-
Episcopal	0/ 0	1/ 175	-	1/ 0	-	-
Methodist	1/ 200	1/ 200	0%/ 0%	0/ 0	-	-
Presbyterian	1/ 200	2/ 300	+100%/ +50%	0/ 0	-	-
Roman Catholic	3/ 500	4/ 1050	+33%/ +110%	4/ 1200	0%/ +14.2%	+33%/ +140%

Table 4

Galveston County, Texas Religious Growth Rate 1850-1870

of Buildings/Seating Capacity, Growth %

Organization	1850	1860	Growth %	1870	Growth %	Total Growth %
Baptist	2/ 900	2/ 850	0%/ -5.5%	1/ 1000	-100%/ +17.6%	-100%/ +11%
Episcopal	-	1/ 1600	-	1/ 1200	0%/ -25%	0%/ -25%
Methodist	3/ 800	2/ 850	-66.6%/ +6.2%	2/ 1100	0%/ +29.4%	-66.6%/ +37.5%
Presbyterian	1/ 700	1/ 500	0%/ -28.5%	1/ 500	0%/ 0%	0%/ -28.5%
Roman Catholic	1/ 3000	2/ 1500	+100%/ -50%	2/ 1600	0%/ +6.6%	+100%/ -46.6%

Table 5

Bexar County, Texas Religious Growth Rate 1850-1870

of Buildings /Seating Capacity, Growth %

Organization	1850	1860	Growth %	1870	Growth %	Total Growth %
Baptist	-	-	-	-	-	-
Episcopal	-	1/ 130	-	1/ 400	0%/ +207.6%	0%/ +207.6%
Methodist	-	1/ 250	-	1/ 300	0%/ +20%	0%/ +20%
Presbyterian	1/ 500	1/ 150	0%/ -70%	2/ 600	+100%/ +300%	+100%/ +20%
Roman Catholic	1/ 500	2/ 1300	+100%/ +160%	2/ 1200	0%/ -7%	+100%/ +140%

Table 6

Religious Organizations in Southern California 1870

of Buildings/Seating Capacity

County	Baptist	Episcopal	Methodist	Presbyterian	Roman Catholic
Kern	-	-	-	1/ 500	-
Los Angeles	1/ 275	2/ 425	1/ 200	-	7/ 1000
San Bernardino	1/ 200	-	2/ 450	-	2/ 430
San Diego	1/ 900	1/ 700	1/ 2,000	1/ ?	6/ 10,000
San Luis Obispo	-	-	2/ 800	1/ 200	1/ 1000
Santa Barbara	-	1/ 500	4/ 450	2/ 200	4/ 1,200

Table 7

Religious Organizations in Northern California 1870

of Buildings/Seating Capacity

County	Baptist	Episcopal	Methodist	Presbyte-rian	Roman Catholic
Butte	-	-	1/ 500	1/ 700	3/ 400
El Dorado	-	2/ 500	5/ 1,000	2/ 500	5/ 500
Placer	-	-	9/ 1,260	-	2/ 650
Yuba	3/ 450	1/ 250	7/ 1,200	1/ 800	3/ 1,100

Endnotes

1 Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 429-454. See also Edwin Scott Gaustad, *A Religious History of America* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1974), 149-153; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, Vol. III, The Nineteenth Century Outside of Europe (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 17-25; and Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 166-174.

2 Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1989, 28 (1), 27. See also Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 54-108.

3 Finke and Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America," 34-35.

4 The failure to collect data on actual church membership has created a dilemma for those using the U.S. Census in studying church growth in the United States during this period. Finke and Stark must be commended for their 1986 study in which they developed a formula for determining church membership by using the 1890 census as a model. Beginning in1890, the census takers counted actual church membership in addition to the number of congregations, number of sittings, and church value. Using these four variables, a formula was created by Finke and Stark that was very accurate when compared to church membership records. They refer to this formula as the

"Regression Method." Employing Finke and Stark's Regression Method to this study would involve converting census data on the local, state and national levels for five Protestant denominations over three census periods. This would be a cumbersome and time-consuming task. An attempt to discover the actual number of church members would be a worthwhile study. For the study at hand, however, emphasis will be placed on numbers of congregations and seating capacity. See Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, "Turning Pews into People: Estimating 19th Century Church Membership," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1986, 25 (2), 181-183.

5 Presbyterians were present in every state except Rhode Island in 1850. In 1860, they were present in every state except Maine.

6 Michael Martin and Leonard Gelber eds., "Texas," *Dictionary of American History* (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1968), 609-610.

7 Latourette, Vol. III, 17.

8 Noll, 166.

9 John D. Woodbridge, Mark A. Noll, and Nathan O. Hatch, *The Gospel in America: Themes in the Story of America's Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 142, 143.

10 Gaustad, 149, 150.

11 Latourette, Vol. III, 19.

12 Latourette, Vol. III, 20.

13 Woodbridge, Noll, and Hatch, 144.

14 Finke and Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America," 31.

15 Finke and Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America," 31.

16 Finke and Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America," 33.

17 Finke and Stark, "How the Upstar Sects Won America," 35.

18 Latourette, Vol. III, 18.

19 Finke and Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America," 31.

20 Finke and Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America," 27.

21 The growth rate percentage of Baptist and Presbyterian buildings and seating capacity in 1870 are slightly misleading. Apart from the general category called "Baptist," the 1870 census lists six additional organizations including Free Will Baptist, Mennonite Baptist, Seventh Day Baptist, Six Principal Baptist, Tunker Baptist, and Winebrenner Baptist. The numbers of these organizations are small but their inclusion would raise the Baptist percentages a bit higher. The same is true for the Presbyterians. The 1870 census adds a category called "other" Presbyterians. Again, the numbers are minimal but would raise the percentages a few points.

22 Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1974), 246.

23 The Baptists congregations declined in only two southern states: Alabama and Texas. Alabama Baptist congregations declined from 805 in 1860 to 789 in 1870, a 2% decrease. Column 6 indicates that the number of Texas Baptist buildings decreased also by almost 2% and that seating capacity declined by over 20%. Methodist congregations also decreased in two states: Virginia and Texas. The total number of Virginia Methodist buildings fell from 1403 to 1011, a 28% decrease. The number of Texas Methodist buildings decreased by 13%. According to the census figures, Texas is the only southern state that saw a decline in total buildings of both the Baptists and Methodists from 1860 to 1870.

24 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "CAMERON COUNTY," http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/hcc4.html (accessed January 8, 2006).

25 Luke Gournay, *Texas Boundaries: Evolution of the State's Counties* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1995), 52-57, 63, 83.

26 There are several explanations for the mysterious Congregational organization in Cameron County. It is possible that a small group of Congregationalists temporarily met in a large building that they borrowed while the census takers made their count. The 1880 Census does not count church buildings. There is no listing of any Congregational building in Cameron County in the 1890 Census. If it did exist in 1870, there were probably so few participants that it went largely unnoticed. Another possibility is that a small group of Protestants with no formal affiliation were meeting in a large building and used the term "congregational" to describe their church polity. The 1870 Census states that Congregational organizations were difficult to count because of the generic use of the term. Both of these explanations are pure speculation on the part of the author. The solution to this question requires additional study.

27 Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant* (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 108, 109. This is the most recent of a number of secondary sources that describe the arrival of Protestantism in Cameron County. See also Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, *Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1991), 157.

28 W. H. Chatfield, *The Twin Cities of the Border* (New Orleans: E. P. Brandao, 1893), 8-10.

29 Ruby A. Wooldridge and Robert B. Vezzetti, *Brownsville: A Pictorial History* (Norfork, VA: The Donning Co. Publishers, 1982), 33.

30 Carl Chilton, "The History of the First Methodist Church of Brownsville," Unpublished monograph, Brownsville, TX, 1993.

31 Kearney and Knopp, 157.

32 Jerry D. Thompson, ed., *Juan Cortina and the Texas-Mexico Frontier, 1859-1877*, The University of Texas at El Paso Southwestern Studies No. 99 (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1994), 1.

33 Amberson, McAllen, and McAllen, 111.

34 Amberson, McAllen, and McAllen, 110. A new Immaculate Conception church was completed in 1859. It was damaged by the hurricane of 1867 but was not destroyed.

35 Gilberto Rafael Cruz and Martha Oppert Cruz, *A Century of Service: The History of the Catholic Church in the Rio Grande Valley* (Harlingen, TX: United Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1979), 14-18. See also Bernard Doyon, *The Cavalry of Christ on the Rio Grande, 1849-1883* (Milwaukee: Bruce Press, 1956).

36 Wooldridge and Vezzetti, 33.

37 Kearney and Knopp, 157.

38 Timothy M. Matovina, *Tejano Religion and Ethnicity: San Antonio, 1821-1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 5.

39 Matovina, 60.

40 Matovina, 61.

41 Matovina, 62.

42 Matovina, 60.

43 Ahlstrom, 45, 46.

44 U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 1870 Census, Vol. 1, "Report of the Superintendent of the Ninth Census," xii, www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1870.htm.

45 There was no census data taken for San Francisco County in 1850.

46 U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 6 February 2006, Decennial Censuses, 1850 Census, Table XXXVIII, XL, lviii; 1860 Census, Part IV, Miscellaneous Statistics, 497-500; 1870 Census, Vol. 1. Miscellaneous Statistics, Table XVII (B), 526; http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/

47 All state and county census data regarding religious statistics can be found at: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 6 February 2006, Decennial Censuses, 1850 Census, Texas, Table XIV, 522-525; 1860 Census, Miscellaneous Statistics Part V, 471-474; 1870 Census, Miscellaneous Statistics, Vol. 1, Table 17 (A), 507-525; http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/

Benedictine Education and Monasticism in the Rio Grande Valley

by

Cipriano A. Cárdenas[1]

Benedictines have a 1,500 year tradition of serving God and His church. The monastic order was founded in the sixth century by St. Benedict, a young noble who fled from a life of wealth and privilege to live as a hermit on the outskirts of Rome at a place called Subiaco. Eventually, he founded a monastery at Monte Cassino, near Naples, attracting many followers who were seeking a life of service and prayer at a time in European history characterized by violence and the corruption of morals. It was at Monte Cassino that Benedict established a Rule to assist his followers in drawing closer to God through self-denial.[2] The Rule combined moderation with fidelity to the best traditions in Christian monasticism.

Through the centuries, the monasticism of St. Benedict spread throughout Europe, and Benedictine monasteries became the principal centers of prayer, culture, and education. In the course of time, lay people asked to be associated with the work of the monks and nuns without leaving their homes, families, and occupations. These too, were received, and they offered themselves to God, becoming Oblates of men's or women's monasteries.[3] From Europe, St. Benedict's way of life has spread throughout the world. Today, there are thirty-three Benedictine monasteries in the United States alone, according to *The 2006 Annual Religious Vocation Guide Directory*. One of these monasteries is the Benedictine Monastery of the Good Shepherd, located just north of Rio Grande City in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brownsville, Texas.

Origins of the Benedictine Presence in Texas

The story of the Benedictine Monastery of the Good Shepherd traces its historical roots to 1852, when a group of three Benedictine

women from Bavaria founded the first American monastery at St. Mary's in Pennsylvania.[4] In time, communities of Benedictine women spread to other parts of the United States, including the Monastery of Mount St. Benedict in the Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota.

The dream of establishing a monastery in Texas' Rio Grande Valley originated in the Mount St. Benedict community's ministry to the Mexican-American farm workers, who began traveling north after the mid-1920s to work in Minnesota's sugar beet fields. Most were from South Texas, where they cultivated and harvested winter garden crops. Early in April, the migrant workers took their children out of school in Texas, and traveled north. Not returning to Texas until the end of October, they had little time for the education of their children. After 1929, a few of the migrant families became permanent residents in the Crookston diocese, sending their children to parochial schools staffed by the Crookston Benedictines.[5]

Groundwork for Future Texas Monastery Laid in the 1940s

In 1942, the Crookston Benedictines began a religious education program for the children of the migrant workers. Migrant families became familiar with the Benedictine community because the sisters would care for their children when they worked in the fields in Minnesota. The program was later expanded to include a summer boarding school where elementary subjects were taught as well as religion. Due to the connection they had with Texas migrant workers and their families, some school and church officials asked the sisters of St. Benedict in Crookston to send sisters to teach and do catechetical ministry in South Texas.[6] In 1943, in response to the Bishop of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, four sisters were sent from Crookston to staff St. Thomas School for Mexican-Americans in Dimmit County, Texas, the home territory of many of the migrants. For approximately thirty years, Benedictine sisters from Crookston provided religious instruction

to Mexican-American children living in the Carrizo Springs area and in other towns in the Dimmit County parish.[7]

Benedictine Sisters Arrive in the Rio Grande Valley

In 1969, after St. Thomas School was absorbed into the public school system, the Crookston Benedictines remained to carry on their tradition of ministry, giving religious instruction in the parish and teaching in the public school. However, in the wake of the Chicano civil rights movement, considerable political tension developed in the Carrizo Springs area. Consequently, the Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of San Antonio told the Crookston Benedictines teaching in Dimmit County that their work would not possibly be effective because of the high degree of tension in the area. After much deliberation and consultation with their prioress, Mother Victorine Fenton, the four sisters relocated in 1971 to the city of Harlingen, in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, where they taught in the public school system and continued the Crookston Benedictine presence among the Hispanic people.[8]

The move to Harlingen brought the Crookston Benedictines to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brownsville, which is comprised of the four southernmost counties of Texas forming the Rio Grande Valley. There, singly and in small groups, they continued to serve the Hispanic people in schools and parishes in the cities of Harlingen, Los Fresnos, Olmito, Weslaco, Mercedes, Donna, and Rio Grande City. Every summer they made the long trip from the Rio Grande Valley to the Red River Valley, near the border of Canada. At the Mount, they renewed relationships, made retreats, and continued their education. In mid-August, they returned to Texas.[9]

The Dream of a Monastic Foundation in the Rio Grande Valley

For about thirty years, the sisters from Crookston worked out of the Carrizo Springs area. However, in 1971, the community

relocated. Sister Luella Walsh was one of those who migrated from the Carrizo Springs area to the Rio Grande Valley, where she experienced the strong, vibrant faith of the Hispanic people and the richness of their culture. She found monastic values being lived out by the Hispanic population in their sense of community and in their acceptance of hard work. Believing that many candidates for religious and monastic life were being formed among them, she envisioned a monastic foundation in Texas where they could live the Benedictine way of life among people of their own culture.[10]

That spark of hope was fanned into flame when Sister Frances (Fran) Solum, OSB, arrived in 1985, after serving for seven years as a missionary among the economically disadvantaged in Bogota, Colombia. Sister Nancy Boushey, OSB, completed the trio when she arrived in the Valley in 1986, after having taught first grade and having worked in ministry on several Indian reservations in North Dakota and Minnesota.[11]

The three nuns, all Minnesota natives, worked hard in their ministries, while living in the community and meeting people from throughout the Diocese of Brownsville. Sister Luella served as a chaplain at Knapp Medical Center in Weslaco, and helped with the formation of lay leaders at St. Pius X Church. Sister Fran ministered in the surrounding parishes, while Sister Nancy directed programs for the youth of the parish, and conducted retreats and renewal programs for the adults. The three were too busy to give much thought to the establishment of a monastery. However, after three years, they realized they were all after the same thing. They were being called to form a monastery somewhere in the Rio Grande Valley.[12]

The Establishment of the Benedictine Monastery of the Good Shepherd at El Sauz

The sisters were advised to pray a novena to the saints to be enlightened as to where they were to plant Benedictine life. It was during that time, after a process of discernment, that they became confident that the place where they would establish a

monastery was to be in rural Starr County, a semi-arid region at the southwestern end of the Diocese of Brownsville.[13] With the help of the Rev. Eduardo Villa of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Escobares, Starr County, the women established the first true monastery in 1989 in the small ranching community of El Sauz, located about twelve miles north of Rio Grande City. This was the first such monastery south of Boerne, Texas, near San Antonio. The sisters hoped that establishing such a facility in the Valley would enable others seeking a monastic life to do so without having to move hundreds of miles away.[14]

The monastery at El Sauz consisted of a modest mission house surrounded by mesquite trees, where the three sisters led a deliberately minimalist lifestyle. However, the sisters were not cloistered, that is, they left the monastery to devote time to ministry work in the Starr County area. Sister Fran assisted public school students with reading difficulties, and Sister Luella transported elderly residents to a center where they were provided meals, while Sister Nancy supervised youth prayer groups and organized retreats for both children and adults.[15]

Texaco Donation Leads to Breaking Ground for a New, Permanent Monastery

After living at El Sauz for approximately four years, the sisters began to set their sight to the south, on a tract of virgin ranch land owned by the Texaco Corporation. In February of 1993, the sisters in El Sauz sent a letter requesting the Texaco Exploration and Production, Inc. in New Orleans to donate or sell to them for a nominal price 115 acres of ranch land located about six miles north of Rio Grande City for the location of a permanent monastery to be a dependent of the Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Crookston, Minnesota. The letter came across the desk of Texaco's land lawyer, Kathleen Matthews, a Catholic who had been educated by the Ursuline Sisters. Ms. Matthews called the sisters to request documentation verifying their status as a tax-exempt corporation

in Texas and identifying Starr County as the poorest in Texas and the second poorest in the nation.[16]

On August 20, 1993, the Texaco Exploration and Production, Inc. officially donated the 115 acres of land to the Benedictine Sisters of the Good Shepherd, making it possible for the Benedictines' monastic work to continue in a permanent setting for all the people of the Brownsville diocese. Seven years later, on August 26, 2000, Sisters Nancy, Luella, and Fran broke ground for the new, permanent Benedictine Monastery of the Good Shepherd. The entire project includes a chapel, the monastery, the priest's house, a retreat center with dormitories, and a cemetery. The construction of the 8/10-mile access road into the monastery grounds was contracted out to a paving company from Mission, Texas. The dips and hills were leveled or cut down and culverts set in. Next the caliche donated by the Conrado Guerra family and Chito Guerra families was hauled in by a trucking company from Edinburg owned by Martin Villarreal, who donated his services for fifty truck loads, each with a value of $150. Many other volunteers donated money, time, and labor to complete the construction of the monastery.[17]

In addition to the three founding nuns, in October 2001 Father Jerry Felion arrived to be the chaplain of the monastery. He is a retired priest from the Sisters' home diocese in Crookston, Minnesota. Also affiliated with the monastery are approximately seventy Lay Oblates from throughout the Rio Grande Valley who attend monthly meetings at the monastery. Each year in November, the Oblates of the Monastery of the Good Shepherd gather for their annual retreat. During the retreat, in special ceremonies, there is an enrollment of oblate candidates, renewal of oblation and making of final oblation. The Monastery has been the setting for numerous meetings, workshops, and conferences related to various issues, such as pro-life activities, vocations, and Monastic Liturgy. Outreach activities are also conducted through the monastery, such as youth groups and their sponsors from Indianapolis, Indiana, who share with the Benedictine oblates a

brief border experience: They visited the city garbage dump in Reynosa, Mexico, where twenty-five families make their home, as well as an orphanage for boys and a health clinic in Mexico.

Although the Oblates of Mary Immaculate first settled in the Rio Grande Valley in the 1850s, founding churches and missions along the Rio Grande from Brownsville to Roma, the new four-building 14,000 square foot complex is the only monastery in the region south of San Antonio and Corpus Christi.[18] The dream planted in the hearts of the three founding nuns to build a monastery for the glory of God has become a reality.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1 Cipriano A. Cárdenas, beside being an Associate Professor and Chair of the Modern languages Department, is a secular Oblate in the Benedictine Monastery of the Good Shepherd.

2 Lawrence Lovasik, *Church History: The Catholic Church through the Ages*, (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1990), 66.

3 Oblates of St. Benedict may be single lay people, married lay people, or secular clergy. Whatever their state in life, Oblates have discerned a call to deepen their Christian commitment through association with a Benedictine religious community. Oblates do not live in a monastery. They continue to live in the world while they strive to live out the values of the Gospel in partnership with the monks or sisters of the Benedictine monastery with which they are affiliated. Benedictine Oblates profess the same Rule as do monks and nuns, forming one "order" with them.

4 Gregg Romero Wendorf, "Benedictine Monastery: Can I Please Move There?" Interview of Sister Nancy Boushey, OSB for *Observations*, on-line column.

5 Sr. Mary Anna Fay, OSB, "A Time for Remembering," 1994.

6 Carol Gregg, *Our Northland Diocese* diocesene newspaper, 2002.

7 Sister Mary Anna Fay, OSB, "A Time for Remembering," 1994.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Address by Sisters Luella Walsh, Frances Solum and Nancy Boushey, at Mount St. Benedict in Crookston, Minnesota, in 1989. Recorded by Mount St. Benedict

archivist, Sister Mary Anna Fay, OSB, in *Notes to Chapter Twenty-Five, "A Time for Giving Birth."*

11 Carol Gregg, *Our Northland Diocese* newspaper, 2002.

12 Sister Mary Anna Fay, OSB, "A Time for Remembering," 1994.

13 Carol Gregg, *Our Northland Diocese* newspaper, 2002.

14 John Bruce, "Spirtual Hunger," *The (McAllen) Monitor*, March 20, 1992. Interview with Sisters Nancy Boushey, Luella Walsh, and Fran Solum.

15 Ibid.

16 Sister Mary Anna Fay, OSB, *A Time for Remembering*, 1994.

17 *The Starr County Benedictine Journal*, Christmass 2001.

18 I am grateful to Sister Nancy Boushey, OSB, for her kind assistance in providing me with documents and materials for this article. Particularly valuable were *Chapter Twenty-Five*, a historical account compiled and authored by Sister Mary Anna Fay, OSB, for the 75th anniversary of the of the Crookston Benedictine community. The title of that unpublished account is *A Benedictine Journey from Monte Cassino to Crookston — The Sisters of St. Benedict of Crookston.* "From Crookston to Texas — A Time for Remembering" is part of the same chapter which was published in 1994 as "Chapter Thirteen," a condensed version, as *A Time for Remembering — the first 75 Years.* Sister Mary Anna Fay is listed as researcher and author of both accounts.

How Reconstruction Changed the Meaning of Red and Blue in Brownsville

by

Lyon Rathbun

In March of 1863, the future Republican Governor of Texas, Edmund J. Davis, was in Matamoros recruiting volunteers for the cavalry regiment, the United States First Texas Volunteers, which he had organized the previous year. Davis had broadcast his presence in Matamoros by walking down to the river bank with other loyalists to shout taunting insults to the Confederate soldiers garrisoned at Fort Brown, over on the American side of the river. "Their boasting talk," a rebel later explained, "riled the boys very much."[1] The night before he was scheduled to leave, a band of Confederates crossed the river, attacked the house where Davis was sleeping, and marched him and his entourage back into Confederate territory.

Only the intervention of the Mexican Governor of Tamaulipas saved Edmund Davis from the fate of his companion, W.W. Montgomery, who was hanged, and his body mutilated, after their capture.[2] When Davis left Mexico alive, newspaper editors across Texas expressed regret that the despised loyalist had not been executed. "Davis is a scoundrel," opined the editor of the San Antonio *Herald*, "whom any Texan would be justified in shooting down like a dog, should he be found voluntarily upon our soil."[3] For the rest of his life, Edmund J. Davis would never forget the way he and other Union loyalists were hounded after Texas seceded from the Union in 1861. Unyielding anger at former Confederates would shape Davis's political career after the war, a career that would help transform how the game of politicking was played in the lower Rio Grande Valley.

When Davis was in Matamoros recruiting troops from among the loyalists who had found refuge in Mexico, he was not only a Union Colonel, but also a former District Judge who had been a prominent member of Brownsville's Blue faction. Like Davis, many of the loyalists he was recruiting in Matamoros were former Blues who had preferred exile to conscription into the Confederate Army. While some of Brownsville's Blues had remained loyal to the Union, others, like Stephen Powers, leader of the Blue faction, had chosen to side with the Confederacy.

In contrast to the Blues, who divided over the issue of secession, Brownsville's Red faction collectively embraced the Confederacy and thereby consolidated their dominance over the local economy. Through their control over the Confederate trade that flowed from Brownsville into Matamoros, the leaders of the Red faction would finance the largest holdings of private property in the United States.[4] By the end of Reconstruction, the land barons of South Texas, King, Kenedy, and Yturria, who had been the leading members of Brownsville's Red faction before the War, would emerge as key constituents of the local Democratic Club. The reconstituted Democratic Party that emerged from Reconstruction would be designated by the color blue.

Still aching to punish his former Confederate enemies, Davis rose quickly after the war as leader of the radical wing of the new Texan Republican Party, and won election for governor in 1869. In his bid for re-election four years later, Davis would be soundly defeated, and the Republican program for reconstructing Texas would be largely dismantled. However, from the 1870's onward, the Republican Party would remain a serious contender for power against the Southern Democratic Party that would retain its majority status until the rise of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. The insignia of the embattled Republican Party in Brownsville, and across Texas, would be the color red.

Before the Civil War and Reconstruction, Brownsville politics were rooted in an essentially local struggle between Democrats,

divided into Red and Blue factions, for control over the city and local economy. When Reconstruction ended with Edmund Davis' gubernatorial defeat in 1873, Brownsville politics were characterized by competition between a local club of the national Democratic Party, identified by the color blue, and a local branch of the national Republican Party, designated by the color red. During the Civil War and Reconstruction, the meaning of red and blue changed in Brownsville.

Many able historians have contributed to our understanding of civic life in Brownsville during the era of Reconstruction. Some, drawing on archival materials, have resurrected particular episodes and particular persons from a very close angle of vision. Others, mentioning events in Brownsville from a regional or national perspective, have necessarily taken a distant, glancing perspective.[5] This study integrates both viewpoints to understand how Reconstruction constituted a transitional phase in Brownsville's history, from a founding period of political conflict before the Civil War, to a Post-Reconstruction era of political stasis that would last into the early Twentieth Century. Tracing how the old factional colors became the new emblems of contending parties illuminates how Reconstruction transformed politics in Brownsville.

Politics in Brownsville before Reconstruction

When E. J. Davis began practicing law in Brownsville during the early 1850's, he found a natural political home in the city's Blue faction, composed primarily of small merchants, professionals, and lesser ranchers. These economic outsiders found common ground in opposing the economic muscle of the Reds, made up of large merchants like José San Román and Francisco Yturria, who were allied to the inner circle of Charles Stillman, Richard King, and Mifflin Kenedy.[6]

Members of both Red and Blue factions were Democrats in their broader political affiliations. However, Brownsville was geographically isolated from the rest of the United States and economically interdependent with Mexico: Brownsville's port at

Brazos Santiago served as an entry point for trade with Northern Mexico.[7] Particularly during the founding phase of its history, Brownsville's proximity to Mexico, combined with its distance from the rest of the United States, tended to enlarge the importance of local factional differences, while it subordinated bonds of common party affiliation.

As early as the 1830's, the smaller foreign merchants in Matamoros had opposed Charles Stillman and his father, Francis Stillman, whose fleet of ships and river steamboats dominated the trade between Matamoros and New Orleans. Economic rivalry had crystallized into recognizable political competition in August of 1848, when Charles Stillman and two partners started the Brownsville Town Company. In the aftermath of the Mexican American War, American Army engineers decided to relocate Fort Brown a quarter mile upriver, where it would be less vulnerable to flooding. Apprised of the move by the Fort's Quartermaster, Major William Chapman, Stillman and his partners purchased 4,676 acres of land adjacent to the new location of the fort from a group of farmers whose own title to the land was contested.[8]

They established The Brownsville Town Company to organize the site of the new town, sell lots, and issue permits and licenses. One of the partners, Simon Mussina, bought an established newspaper, the *American Flag*, to promote the sale of town lots, and the company also began a ferry service to link the new town site with Matamoros. In January of 1849, the Cameron County seat was moved to Brownsville, further solidifying the city's status as *the* center of economic and civic activity in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Candidates for city and county office who represented the interests of the Brownsville Town Company organized their own political club – identified with a distinguishing color, red, that could be easily identified by the illiterate masses of Mexican-American voters who were "corralled" to vote for the club's representatives.[9]

Stephen Powers, who had come to the Valley as an American Army officer during the Mexican American War, was soon mounting a formidable challenge to Stillman's Brownsville Town Company. With a cadre of allies, Powers had organized the Blue Club to oppose Stillman's control of the new town. To undercut the legal standing of the Brownsville Town Company, Powers and his cronies applied to the state of Texas for permission to incorporate Brownsville into a city. When the state granted permission in 1850, the new state charter of incorporation had, seemingly, invalidated the Brownsville Town Company's title to city land.[10]

Considering the Brownsville Town Company title invalid, Powers and his Blue allies on the city council passed a resolution to confiscate the Brownsville town ferries and to oblige all lot purchasers to submit their titles for validation. Israel Bigelow, the city's first mayor, vetoed the resolution and then governed the city from his law office, refusing to call meetings of the city commission. The Blues retaliated by electing their own majority to the city council, ousting Bigelow on twelve counts of elections irregularities, and electing Robert Lemon to replace him as mayor. The new Blue mayor, with a Blue majority on the city council, set up a system for selling city claimed lots in direct competition with Brownsville Town Company claims. In February of 1851, the council took the added step of establishing a preemption rights system for those who were occupying city lots without clear title to their land.[11]

With control over the city at stake, the rival factions drew on the paternalistic traditions of the region to establish a pattern of politicking that would endure into the 1920's.[12] The mostly Anglo leaders of the contending cliques sought electoral advantage by "corralling" the poor, illiterate Mexican-American majority to the voting booth. Voters were enticed by free food and drink to pre-election day rallies that would last all night. In the morning, voters would be brought to adjacent polling places to vote.[13]

Bigelow's ouster from the mayor's office only escalated competition between Blues and Reds for control over the city. With the backing of the Red faction, Bigelow was subsequently elected to the state legislature, where he was able to have the city charter declared invalid. Under Red sponsorship, Brownsville was incorporated under a second charter that upheld land titles issued under the auspices of the Brownsville Town Company. Competition for office distracted rival Blue and Red city officers from addressing immediate municipal issues. Moreover, the dispute over ownership of city property deterred many potential settlers from buying property in Brownsville and discouraged those who did own from making significant improvements to their property.[14] Competition between factions not only established the political agenda in Brownsville, but also colored the city's civic ethos. In *Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville,* Kearney and Knopp conclude that "partisan hatreds, rather than any more charitable sentiment, set the tone for the new town."[15]

Edmund Davis entered Brownsville society in 1853 when the contest between Reds and Blues for control over city land was at its height. He had been born in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1827, and had moved to Galveston, Texas, with his family in 1848. After being admitted to the bar in 1849, Davis spent two and a half years as Deputy Collector and Inspector of Customs for Laredo.[16] He began representing clients in Corpus Christi, Laredo, and Brownsville while still working as a federal customs collector.

After helping E.M. Pease win his race for governor in 1853, Davis was appointed District Attorney for Cameron County by the state legislature.[17] Davis moved to Brownsville after resigning his federal post and was soon allied with the founder of the Blue faction, Stephen Powers, who was also an attorney specializing in land titles and real-estate contracts. Davis solidified his place in the city's civic life by joining Brownsville's Masonic Lodge No. 81. In April of 1854, he received the first three Degrees in Freemasonry by special dispensation from the District Deputy Grand Master, Stephen Powers himself.[18]

Both Powers and Davis sought advantage for their faction, and for themselves, through remaining active in the Democratic Party. Powers appointed Davis Democratic elector for Webb County in 1856, and the following year Davis was chosen as a county delegate to the Waco Democratic State Convention.[19] Governor Pease appointed Davis judge of the Twelfth District Court in 1856.[20] From his headquarters in Brownsville, Davis made regular rounds through his district, which included the Lower Rio Grande Valley counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Webb. In 1858, Davis married Anne Elizabeth (Lizzie) Britton, the daughter of a prominent Jacksonian Democrat from Corpus Christi, Major Forbes Britton. Davis established his primary residence in Corpus Christi while keeping a second residence on Levee Street in Brownsville.[21]

Although Davis left the Democratic Party during the crisis over secession, while Powers sided with the Confederacy, the two men remained friends. Davis wrote a conciliatory letter to Powers in 1876, after losing his bid for re-election as governor. He affirmed his old factional connection to Powers and noted: "the wars & rumors of wars have not changed Rio Grande politics much ... I was a 'blue' also; I suppose it is according to the eternal fitness of things."[22] When Powers' law partner, Nester Maxan, was killed in 1877, Powers first invited Davis to join his law practice.[23] When Davis declined, Powers recruited the twenty-eight year old James B. Wells, who would subsequently dominate Brownsville politics until his death in 1923.

Demise of the Blues; Ascendancy of the Reds

While Stephen Powers was able to mount an effective legal challenge to Stillman's Brownsville Land Company, the Reds steadily increased their economic power through the late 1850's. Charles Stillman continued to dominate the New Orleans trade with Matamoros and Northern Mexico. In 1850, Stillman had formed a partnership with Mifflin Kenedy and Richard King to form the M. Kenedy & Company, which monopolized riverboat

traffic through the Civil War period. Another prominent member of the Red faction, Francisco Yturria, gained monopoly control over local banking with his Yturria Bank after the Brownsville branch of the Commercial and Agricultural Bank closed in 1858. The wealthy Red faction acquired almost total control over Brownsville's economy by depriving the smaller Blue merchants of credit.[24]

The Blue faction was further weakened by schism during the crisis over secession and the outbreak of the Civil War. Stephen Powers, the linchpin of the Blue faction, sided with the Confederacy during the war, and he continued to practice law in Brownsville. As an expert in Mexican land law, Powers would help Richard King and Mifflin Kenedy consolidate their land-holdings into two of the largest ranches in the United States.[25] Joseph Kleiber, another member of the Blue faction, also sided with the Confederacy and made significant profits selling medicines, munitions, and other goods to Confederate clients during the war.[26]

While some members of the Blue faction sided with the Confederacy, others remained loyal to the Union. In June of 1861, a Confederate mob forced the Blue postmaster, F.F. Fenn, to resign his post. His property in Brownsville was seized when he fled to Matamoros. Another prominent Blue, Joseph Palmer, was also forced to abandon his property and flee to Matamoros.[27] In 1861, a state law was passed that required all local citizens to swear their allegiance to the Confederate states, prompting a new wave of Union loyalists, many of them Blue sympathizers, to abandon their property and cross the river to Matamoros.[28] The Anglo community in Matamoros (made up of Union sympathizers and Confederate merchants) grew sufficiently large to sustain an English-language newspaper, the *Morning Caller*.[29]

Edmund Davis was the most prominent citizen of Brownsville to side with the Union. By 1861, he had become sufficiently prominent to command a hearing from his fellow citizens. John Ford recalled in his memoirs that Davis had become popular in

Brownsville and had "acquired influence" with his fellow citizens.[30] An assembly of Brownsville citizens endorsed Davis in December, 1861, to represent the city at the upcoming secession convention.[31] In the ensuing election for delegates, held on January 8, 1861, Davis came in fourth, losing the third delegate seat to John Ford, who was allied with the Reds. The Red faction also elected James Walworth, a business partner of Richard King's, as a delegate to the state secession convention.[32]

Perhaps three years as a Federal Customs officer had left Davis with a sense of loyalty to the Federal Government that trumped immediate communal pressures to join the Confederacy. Whatever the exact source of his Unionist sympathies, Davis was a staunch loyalist from the beginning of the crisis over secession. Later, his brother would recall that Edmund had opposed secession "from its very inception," and had become a candidate for the secession convention, "hoping that he might be able to prevent the secession of Texas and thereby save our State from the misfortunes it brought on us."[33] Although he failed to stop secession, Davis did succeed in winning the contempt of his fellow citizens, who ostracized him from a community that had previously held him in high regard.

Davis' judgeship was declared vacant when he refused to pledge his allegiance to the Confederacy in 1861. Stephen Powers, then acting as Justice of Cameron County, immediately announced his candidacy and won the vacant judgeship.[34] Davis returned to Corpus Christi after being driven from the bench, where he refused conscription into the Confederate armed forces. Finally, after being threatened by a group of vigilantes in 1862, Davis fled from Texas, leaving his wife and two young sons in Corpus Christi.[35] He had been banished as a despised traitor to the Confederate cause, but would return to Texas as a determined avenger of Federal authority.

The Blue faction splintered over the question of secession. In contrast, members of the Red Clique uniformly supported the Confederacy. Before the war, King, Kenedy, and Stillman

had profited from Democratic patronage for their steamboat company; once the war began, they won lucrative army contracts from the Confederate government.[36] M. Kenedy and Company monopolized the transport of Confederate cotton down the river from Matamoros to Bagdad and also the unloading of cargoes from seagoing ships anchored off of Bagdad. In 1863, M. Kenedy & Co. became the sole supplier to the Confederate forces on the border. R. King and Company, owned by Richard King, Mifflin Kenedy, and Captain Walworth, weighed and stored incoming cotton at the Santa Getrudis Ranch before it continued on to the Rio Grande.[37]

The three main owners of the two interrelated companies each had their own specialization: King protected the movement of cotton across the "Wild Horse Desert" between Corpus Christi and Brownsville; Kenedy oversaw the transfer into Mexico and onto company riverboats; Stillman negotiated the conveyance of cotton to waiting ships anchored off Bagdad.[38] Another prominent member of the Red faction, Francisco Yturria, also found a specialized niche in the wartime economy by running one store for stocking supplies in Matamoros and another store for forwarding goods north of Brownsville.[39]

The enormity of the Civil War had overshadowed the old factional issues that had galvanized Brownsville before the war. Blues divided over secession: some found a new sense of group identity through supporting the Confederacy and others through defending the Union. Brownsville's Reds lost their relatively petty status as a mere economic elite. They found a new sense of purpose — and source of profit — through dominating the Matamoros trade that was vital to the Confederate economy.

However, the Civil War had not obliterated the antebellum conflict between Brownsville's Red and Blue factions. The old political rivalries would re-emerge after the defeat of the Confederacy. Yet they would do so within a new context of regional competition between an embattled Democratic Party, controlled by former

Confederates, and a new Texan Republican Party, dominated by former Union loyalists like Edmund Davis. And by the end of Reconstruction, the old factional conflict would peter out, and the old factional colors would acquire new significance.

The Rise of Edmund Davis and the Republican Party

Edmund Davis did not wait until his post-war political career to begin attempting to redeem what he had lost and to avenge what he had suffered during the war; indeed, it was his war-time exploits that enabled him to rise so quickly as a pubic figure when the war finally ended in 1865.

After leaving Corpus Christi so ignominiously in 1862, Davis had made his way to Washington DC, where he applied for a commission as an officer in the Union Army and lobbied President Lincoln to consider his plan for re-arming Texas Unionists, capturing the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and stopping Confederate commerce flowing through Brownsville and Matamoros. Davis returned to New Orleans, where, after receiving a respectful hearing, he organized the United States First Texas Volunteer Cavalry Regiment.[40]

Davis had sailed for Matamoros in March of 1863 to rescue his family and to recruit troops for his cavalry regiment. After his capture in Bagdad, Davis had returned to New Orleans in time to join the 6,000 Union troops that landed at Brazos de Santiago and re-captured Brownsville on November 2, 1863. He wrote to his wife that he was back in Brownsville "under rather different circumstances from my last trip to this place." He vowed not to forget those who supported him when he was "very much in want of friends" and promised to "spare no pains" in bringing Brownsville's loyal citizens back home.[41] Davis led his First Texas Calvary and other troops in patrolling the lower reaches of the river until federal troops were withdrawn from South Texas in 1864. While Union forces never succeeded in stopping Confederate trade into Mexico, they did divert the Confederate caravans to Laredo and Eagle Pass. Davis' role in this endeavor constituted the highlight

of his military career, even though he later served with distinction in Louisiana and East Texas.[42]

Davis had risen to the rank of Brigadier General by the time Lee surrendered at Appomattox in April of 1865. On June 2nd, 1865, Davis presided over the Confederate surrender of Texas on board the Steamer *Fort Jackson* in Galveston Harbor.[43] As a combat veteran who had recruited his own Calvary Regiment, Davis returned to civilian life as an icon of steadfast loyalty to the Union and quickly assumed a prominent role in Texas politics.

Throughout his post-war political career, Davis maintained a reputation for honesty and principled public service. Even the editor of Brownsville's *Daily Ranchero,* Henry Maltby, who devoted his own post-war career to vilifying Republican Reconstruction, conceded Davis's honesty. Shortly after Davis won the governor's race in 1869, Maltby wrote,

> Davis has gained one good reputation with his party, and that is honesty of purpose, and unchangeableness. He entered the canvas as a straight out radical and from the path he never wavered. ... He stuck well. Where he had stuck his pigs he was sure to always be found. Though we always have believed his political course to be wrong, we cannot strip him of the jewel of consistency.[44]

Davis was honest and also principled in promoting the essential planks of his Reconstruction program: racial equality, universal education, and economic diversification. Generations later, Texans would broadly endorse the policies that Davis was championing in the wake of the Civil War. However, while Davis was progressive in his aims, his methods remained vindictive. He would never forgive his former Confederate enemies; he would never grasp Abraham Lincoln's understanding that a post-war peace could only be achieved through reconciliation with former Confederates.[45] Edmund Davis simply could never stop fighting the Civil War.

In 1866, Davis was advocating the arrest of all persons who were in possession of property confiscated from Union loyalists during the war.[46] That same year, he was also advocating a law requiring the War and Navy Secretaries to deliver appointments to the sons of Southern loyalists who had fought in the Union Army.[47] "Magnanimity to rebels is weakness or stupidity," Davis exclaimed in 1869. "The rebels are not fit to govern," he declared, "and they shall not again govern, so help me God."[48]

When Presidential Reconstruction gave way to the more prescriptive measures of Congressional Reconstruction in 1867, the Republican Party became a presence in Texas politics and Davis became leader of the party's radical wing. His vision for reconstructing Texas was, indeed, radical: he favored full suffrage to freedmen – who had previously been excluded from public life — and complete disenfranchisement of former Confederates – who had long dominated Texas politics.[49] Davis did not have to wait for opportunities to champion his uncompromising version of Reconstruction.

In February, 1868, Davis was elected president of the Convention that convened to draft a new state constitution. Soon, he was advocating positions that alienated not only Democrats, but even moderate Republicans. He insisted that West Texas be established as a separate state, which could be controlled by Republicans. He also lobbied for *ad initio*, the nullification of *all* legislation that had been enacted since March 1, 1861. Davis justified his position by explaining that the Confederacy had only been "an immense vigilante committee, an organized mob that could not have made laws recognized by the government against which it had rebelled."[50] Explaining why he favored disenfranchising all who had voluntarily aided or abetted the Confederacy, Davis declared, "The Romans never allowed the conquered to govern and control loyal Roman citizens, nor did they allow the vanquished to govern themselves."[51]

As Davis championed his uncompromising version of Reconstruction, moderate Republicans joined Democrats in rebuking Davis as a polarizing influence. W.W. Mills, a conservative Republican delegate at the 1868 Constitutional Convention, observed that Davis was "inordinately ambitious, vain, and vindictive ..."[52] Although Davis had redeeming qualities that Mills did not concede in this characterization, it remains true that Davis could not stop waving his clenched fists in the faces of his former Confederate enemies.

When Davis won the governorship in 1869, he immediately sought powers that would enable him to enforce his vision of Reconstruction. Within weeks of his election, Davis engineered passage of several bills through the Republican-dominated twelfth legislature that gave him extraordinary executive prerogatives. To combat widespread violence, much of it directed against freedmen and loyalists, the Legislature enacted a militia bill that required all able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five to enroll in local militias. As commander-in-chief, the governor could declare martial law in any county and call on the militia to re-establish order. A state police bill was also passed that created a state police force of 258 men that would operate in each county and was under the ultimate control of the governor. Under other legislative acts, Davis was given the authority to appoint replacements to state, district, and local officers that were vacant and also to enact a new system of voter registration in every county of the state. Another act authorized the governor to designate in each judicial district a newspaper that should be the official organ and to do the public printing for that district. No public notice could be legally advertised except in this paper.[53]

Radical Reconstruction in Brownsville

The extraordinary measures that Davis signed into law at the beginning of his term had a profound effect in Brownsville and in other municipalities across the state. However, Brownsville had

already begun experiencing the effects of Reconstruction before Davis was elected governor in 1869.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, reeling from the traumas of defeat, economic dislocation, widespread crime, epidemics, and natural disasters, former adversaries had cooperated in restoring civic order to Brownsville.[54] In January of 1866, civilian government was re-established under a city council appointed by local military officials that included many former antagonists. The new major, Josiah Moorhead, was a Unionist. The council members included Stephen Powers, Alex Werbiski, Adolphus Glavaecke, Mifflin Kenedy, Henry Miller, and Robert Shears, all of whom had all taken oaths to uphold the Confederate government back in 1861. Though composed of former adversaries, the council was able to enact useful measures. A health officer was appointed to help enforce a yellow fever quarantine. Steamboats were required to land at the wharf, rather than along the shore adjacent to the city, which discharged river water onto city streets. Licenses were required of water carriers who supplied the city with river water. To minimize the risk of fire, the council also passed an ordinance in 1866 regulating the construction and placement of stove pipes.[55]

Post-war cooperation in Brownsville was possible largely because the first phase of Reconstruction, Presidential Reconstruction, lasting from 1865 to 1867, had authorized former Confederate officers to resume normal civic life after requesting, and receiving, presidential pardons.[56] However, the former Confederates who controlled the state under Presidential Reconstruction obstinately refused to endorse the Thirteenth or Fourteenth Amendments and imposed "Black Codes" that effectively disenfranchised former slaves in counties with high concentrations of freedmen.[57] The Federal Congress had reacted to intransigency in Texas, and across the South, by inaugurating Congressional Reconstruction. Begun in March of 1867 with passage of the First Reconstruction Act, the second phase of Reconstruction declared existing Southern governments to be provisional, and divided the South into five military districts, with Texas included in the Fifth Military District.

As soon as the commander of the sub-district of Texas, General Charles Griffin, had assumed his command, he began replacing county and state officials with men who could take the "Test Oath," which stated that they had never voluntarily borne arms against the United States or given "aid, countenance, council, or encouragement to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto."[58]

In Cameron County, officials who had served during Presidential Reconstruction were removed. Israel Bigelow, then serving as County Judge, was replaced by Edward Downey. The city treasurer, J.G. Smith, was replaced by Joseph Pugegnat. When Griffin succumbed to yellow fever in the fall of 1867, his replacement, Joseph J. Reynolds, continued the purges his predecessor had initiated. By the end of November, 1867, Reynolds had replaced more than 400 county officials in fifty-seven counties across the state. In Brownsville, General Reynolds had replaced the entire Brownsville city council. Three of the replacements, Joseph Hopkins, Jeremiah Galvan, and James L. Rudolph, had been residents of Brownsville since the late 1840s. Yet two others, Fred Starck and F.H. Pierce, were newcomers.[59]

As governor, Davis took particular pains to remake the city that had once banished him into a Republican strong-hold.[60] His appointments were particularly conspicuous in removing allies of Brownsville's old Red faction from positions of power. In 1870, Davis used the Enabling Act to replace the mayor and council, whom Reynolds had appointed the previous year. The mayor, Edward Downey, had worked as a clerk for M. Kennedy & Co. before the war and in 1869 had traveled to Washington, where he lobbied the Army Department to send its supplies for frontier posts up the Rio Grande, which would require the use of Kenedy steamboats.[61]

Several sacked council members also had ties to the old Red faction. One, Joseph Hopkins, had been a deputy customs collector at Brazos Santiago before the war, a patronage position controlled by the King, Kenedy, and Stillman faction.[62] Another, Frederick

E. Starck, had come to Brownsville as a first lieutenant of the 20th Iowa Infantry in 1864, and had married the daughter of Petra Vela de Vidal, wife of Mifflin Kenedy. A moderate whom Reynolds had appointed to the city council in June of 1869, Starck was suspect merely because he had married into a prominent Democratic family.[63]

On July 13, 1870, Mayor Downey was replaced by Frank Cummings, a strong Davis ally. Davis appointed eight individuals to the city council, none of whom had been residents before the war, and five of whom were natives of Germany. Only Leopold Schlinger had been a resident – and he, tellingly, was a dry goods store merchant affiliated with the city's old Blue faction.[64]

Using the Enabling Act to appoint friendly officials to city government, Davis used the Public Printing Act to establish a Republican newspaper in Brownsville. In 1871, he granted the state's public printing contract to two members of the Cameron County Republican Executive Committee, Henry Haupt and Dr. B.S. Smith. With Republican Party backing, they bought Henry Maltby's *Daily Ranchero*, changing its name to the *Daily Ranchero and Republican.*[65] Judge William Russell, an ally of the Red faction who did not want Haupt to receive the printing contract, retaliated by issuing an injunction requiring Haupt to release a letter written by Governor Davis to Frank Cummings concerning the public printing contract. When Haupt declined, Judge Russell sentenced him to three days in jail and ordered him to pay a fine of $100. In March of 1871, after his imbroglio with Russell, and after beginning to print the *Daily Ranchero and Republican,* Haupt was shot in Brownsville and seriously wounded.[66]

Judge Russell and other Brownsville citizens were brazen in their defiance of Davis policies. After Russell fined Haupt, Davis initiated impeachment proceedings against Russell and replaced him in 1871 with F. E. McManus.[67] Before leaving the bench, Russell issued a writ of injunction to restrain city officials from enforcing a prohibition against carrying concealed weapons, a

measure that Davis had promoted to lessen rampant violence.[68] In May of 1871, Russell issued another court injunction to prevent a state health officer from enforcing a yellow fever quarantine at Brazos Santiago. Davis called upon state police officers to help enforce the quarantine, and warned Cameron County Sheriff William Scanlan that he would impose martial law if state laws were not enforced. At the time, Davis accused Judge Russell of defying the governor's authority; later, he would describe Russell as a 'despicable and miserable fellow."[69] But Russell was not the only Brownsville citizen defying Republican policies. Davis also blamed Stephen Powers for attempting to break the quarantine and defying his authority.[70]

In Brownsville, and elsewhere, Democrats and moderate Republicans quickly developed a vitriolic loathing for Davis and his administration. In 1870, John Ford was sufficiently incensed by Republican policies to start his own newspaper, *The Sentinel.* His editorials were so acerbic that he was temporarily denied the right to vote.[71] Rudolf Krause, whom Davis had appointed county sheriff in 1870, was so irked by Ford's editorials that he provoked Ford in the Miller Hotel. In the resulting altercation, Krause shot Ford in the hand as Ford was grasping him by either his ears or his throat.[72] Ford would never moderate his loathing for Davis' Republican administration. In old age, Ford was still employing a tone of scalding condemnation to describe Republican policies. In the very last section of his memoirs, Ford recalled that the *Sentinel* had been opposed to the election of Edmund Davis as governor of Texas "and to all the wild and oppressive measures of the Republican party, in reference to the reconstruction of the Confederate States and other unconstitutional heresies they advocated and passed into laws."[73]

Other Brownsville citizens echoed Ford in expressing their own outrage over Davis policies. Ford's fellow-editor, Henry Maltby, wrote dozens of editorials denouncing Davis' reconstruction policies. On January 11th, 1870, the same day that Reynolds declared Davis the winner of the recently concluded gubernatorial

election, Maltby hyperbolically exclaimed, "This state is once more under the rule of the bayonet. The course of events is tending to complete centralism."[74] Expressing the indignation felt by many Brownsville Democrats, John McAllen, a former Confederate, wrote, "The city fathers are all government appointees and not elected —- they don't care how present parties suffer; they can make their own laws to suit the time as they are supported by the bayonets at Fort Brown."[75] Ford, Maltby, and other Brownsville Democrats would soon have their opportunity to defeat both Davis and Reconstruction. Their efforts would complete the reconfiguration of political conflict in Brownsville.

The Resurrection of the Democratic Party

By the time Edmund Davis ran for re-election in 1873, a tidal wave of opposition was reaching critical mass. In his 1810 history of Reconstruction in Texas, Charles Ramsdell suggests the palpable revulsion that energized opponents of Davis. "The Administration of Davis," Ramsdell wrote, "was responsible for more of the bitterness with which the people of Texas have remembered the reconstruction era than all that happened from the close of the war to 1870 ... Certainly the name of no Texan has gone down to posterity so hated as his."[76] In August of 1871, on the eve of legislative elections, conservative Democrats and moderate Republicans convened a Tax-Payers' Convention to decry the cost of Davis policies and to foment opposition. The Democratic majority elected to the state legislature three months later amended the Militia Act, repealed the State Police Act, and passed a string of other measures that began dismantling Reconstruction programs.[77]

During the gubernatorial campaign, Davis was demonized as a despotic traitor who had allowed a horde of scalawags and carpetbaggers to seize the reigns of state power. Suggesting that much hatred of Davis stemmed from his efforts to enfranchise freedmen, the Democratic editor of the Clarksville's *Standard* fulminated that Davis had "endeavored to place us beneath the feet

of the brutish negroes, who have been our slaves."[78] On election day, the absence of either federal troops or state police at polling places suppressed the negro vote, while white turnout increased in comparison to the 1869 election. When ballots were counted, Davis's opponent, Richard Coke, won in a landslide of 85,549 to 42,663. Democrats swept into all of the state offices and secured total control of the state legislature.[79]

When Davis refused to accept the outcome of the election, he ignited a constitutional crisis that cemented his reputation as a stubborn despot and gave his Democratic enemies a prime opportunity to solidify their public image as "Redeemers" of the state's imperiled civic integrity. Brownsville's own John Ford played a starring role in this culminating demise of Radical Republicanism in Texas. His subsequent political career dramatizes how the effort to defeat Reconstruction transformed politics in Brownsville and across Texas.

On January 5, 1874, the Republican majority on the state Supreme Court ruled that the recently completed gubernatorial election had been unconstitutional and was invalid.[80] Davis vowed to continue in office and ordered a detachment of state troops to block entry and exit of the statehouse. Meanwhile, Governor-elect Coke and the new Democratic majority of the Fourteenth Legislature had convened inside the legislative chambers of the statehouse. On the night of January 15th, in a raucous ceremony that included dozens of Democratic loyalists who had convened on the capital from all over the state, Coke, along with his lieutenant governor, were inaugurated as the state's executive officers. Aware that Davis was preparing to protect his office with military force, the Democratic legislators deputized a volunteer militia company, the Travis Rifles, to protect the Legislative Chambers. John Ford, along with two other revered Confederate veterans, was appointed sergeant at arms with authority to supervise the protection of the legislature and surrounding area.[81]

When news had arrived in Brownsville that Davis was refusing to vacate his office because the Supreme Court had invalidated the election, Ford had traveled to Austin in a fever of patriotic emotion. "The action of the Supreme Court," Ford later explained,

> produced a lively sensation among the people generally. They were satisfied the intention of the radicals of Texas was to hold on to office and power at all hazards. In this instance a large majority given at the polls was to be overridden and crushed. The people of Texas were to be held in serfdom. The Republican armies had freed the negro, but the republican despots of Texas were aiming to make dishonored slaves of thousands of Texans.[82]

In old age, Ford would look back on his involvement in toppling the Davis Administration as the capstone of his political career. As the crisis was peaking, two days after he had been deputized Sergeant at Arms, Ford used his stolid, dead-pan charisma to stop a gathering mob of Democratic supporters from attacking the Negro garrison that had arrested the Democratic mayor of Austin and was holding him in the State armory. In his memoirs, Ford would reminisce that,

> the service we rendered Texas on that occasion was worth infinitely more than all others, and I say now that if the row had commenced, in my opinion, not less than 20,000 would have been killed in two weeks and Texas would not have recovered from it in fifty years.[83]

In helping to head off a violent confrontation, Ford had deprived Davis of a reason for declaring martial law, calling in Federal troops, and possibly nullifying the election. Ford returned to Brownsville in April, after the crisis had passed, with new credentials as the city's foremost Democratic "Redeemer." In the next election, the citizens of Brownsville elected John Ford mayor. Before the decade was over, he would serve as delegate to the Constitutional

Convention of 1875 and serve two terms in the State Legislature – all as an *emphatic* Democrat.[84]

The New Meaning of Red and Blue and Brownsville

John Ford had always been a Democrat, but before Reconstruction he was also an ally of Brownsville's Red faction. It was John Ford who had advised King and Kenedy to put their steamboats under Mexican flag and thus avoid capture by the Union Blockader that waited off shore at Brazos Santiago.[85] As commander of Confederate troops at Fort Brown in 1861, Ford had also organized patrols across the Nueces Strip to protect the cotton caravans that made their way from King's Santa Gertrudis Ranch to Brownsville. In 1865, when Ford was ill with malaria, Richard King acknowledged Ford's services by surreptitiously depositing $250 of credit into Ford's bank account every month for a period of two year.[86]

When Ford returned to Brownsville in April of 1874, he would remain deeply loyal to the large ranchers who had once constituted the inner circle of the Red faction. But Ford was no longer affiliated with a recognizable Red faction: As an independent political entity, the Red Club had ceased to exist. Its wealthy members, who had always been Democrats, still constituted a powerful interest group. However, as an autonomous political entity, the Reds had been subsumed into the Democratic Party that had found a new identify in saving Texas from the indignities of Reconstruction.[87] In the very last lines of his memoir, composed after old age had forced him to retire from public life, Ford suggests how being a Democrat had become the core of his identity, the wellspring of what redeemed the sacrifices he, and so many others, had made on behalf of the lost cause. Referring to himself in the third person, Ford closed his memoirs exclaiming that he

> thanks God that he has lived to see the Confederate States incontestably Democratic, a majority of Democrats in the United Representatives, and

to have witnessed the four year administration of Grover Cleveland, a Democratic president.[88]

Looking back on his long, eventful life, John Ford did not recall the glory of being a revered Texas Ranger, or a beloved military commander; he did not remember that he had been a husband, or a father, or a doctor, or a newspaper editor. With unflinching emphasis, Ford remembered that he had been a *Democrat.*

Brownsville's Democratic Club had been organized by Stephen Powers on the eve of the state elections in 1873, a fitting year for resurrecting the Democratic Party in Cameron County. The First Reconstruction Act of 1867, which required office holders to pass the "Test Oath," had disenfranchised most Democrats and crippled the Democratic Party: In the governor's race of 1869, the Democratic Candidate, Hamilton Stewart, received a total of 445 votes.[89] Revived by the 1872 Federal Amnesty Act that enfranchised ex-Confederates, Democrats (who had already recovered the State House in the 1871 elections) closed ranks to defeat Davis in the upcoming state election. On the eve of that election, held in December of 1873, Stephen Powers had appropriated the old factional color, blue, to identify the city's new Democratic organization.[90] The club came into being to defeat Davis, and its subsequent purpose was to defeat Republicans, now identified by the color red, who would continue to challenge Democratic hegemony until after the turn of the twentieth century. While nobody was paying particular attention, the furor over Congressional Reconstruction had changed the meaning of blue and red in Brownsville. One Brownsville citizen who did notice, William Neale, thought that the change of color affiliations had occurred by "some mysterious process."[91] The change was not mysterious so much as it was historical: the result of many factors inconspicuously interacting in the midst of every-day-life.

The Republican Club of Cameron County had probably begun using the color red to "corral" its voters in the 1871 and 1873 elections. However, exactly when red ceased to indicate the

clique of Stillman *et alia* and became the representative color of the Republican Party is uncertain. The color was possibly being used in 1873 to rally voters for the old Stillman-Kenedy clique who were trying to prevent the new Rio Grande Railroad from laying track on city property, a development that would threaten their control over local transportation.[92] A clear date for the eclipse of the Red faction as an independent political club is 1874, when Kenedy and King sold their steamboat company to the new railroad in order to concentrate on their huge ranching enterprises. In giving up their monopoly over river transportation, King and Kenedy had eliminated the economic foundation for the old Red-Blue factional rivalry. What remained was the new structure of opposition between Democratic and Republican clubs, identified by their own respective colors, which would last until the leader of the Democratic Machine in South Texas, James Wells, died in 1923.

Emerging from the mercurial politics of Reconstruction, Brownsville's new system of political competition was remarkably stable. After John Ford resigned from the mayor's office in 1875, two Democrats would hold the office for the next thirty years, George William, from 1876 to 1878, and Thomas Carson, who served from 1879 until 1904.[93] Democrat Adolphus Glaevecke held the office of Cameron County clerk for seventeen years, from 1874 until 1881. When Stephen Powers died in 1882, his successor, James Wells, extended the reach of Brownsville's Blue Club into Hidalgo, Starr, and Duval counties. Here, Wells forged alliances with bosses who ran their own local machines while acknowledging Wells' leadership on regional, state, and national questions.[94] A basic reciprocity lubricated the Powers-Wells machine: The party patrons provided basic services for the large ranchers, Brownsville merchants, and the Mexican American majority. In exchange, Powers, and then Wells, received their constituents' support.

The key members of the new Democratic coalition were the large ranchers, many of whom had once formed the inner circle of

Brownsville's Red faction. By 1890, ninety ranchers, owning over 1,000 acres each, controlled ninety-seven percent of the land in Cameron County. Nineteen ranches contained over 10,000 acres each. James G. Browne controlled 114,000 acres. The Kings and the Kenedys held over 300,000 acres each. The majority of the county's population consisted of rural Hispanics who worked as share croppers, small farmers, ranch hands, and farm laborers. Because of the patron-peon relationship that endured in the Rio Grande Valley, the large landowners were able to deliver the votes of their Hispanic employees and neighbors.[95] Though it had a different constituency, the Republican Club also depended on its ability to deliver a large bloc of uneducated, dependent voters.

Never gaining majority status, Republicans remained a viable threat throughout the nineteenth century. Although Republican returns were negligible in Cameron County through the end of the 1870's, Republican candidate Thomas Peck Ochiltree swept the district running for the Federal Congress in 1882. In neighboring Duval County, between 1890 and 1906, the local Republican Club, also designated by the color red, consistently won a slight majority over its Democratic rival.[96]

Until the election of Grover Cleveland in 1884, Republican presidents filled the local customs house and post offices with party loyalists who could distribute patronage and thereby wield power at the local and regional levels. Somewhat like Edmund Davis thirty years before, Robert Rentfro came to Brownsville in 1879 as a deputy collector at the customs house and soon became leader of the Republican Red Club. In 1890, President Harrison rewarded Rentfro for his services to the Republican Party by appointing him Collector of Customs for the entire area between Brazos de Santiago to Eagle Pass. When Rentfro died, leadership of the Red Club would pass to his son, R.B. Rentfro and his nephew, R.B. Creager.[97]

The competition between Cameron County's new political Clubs had little in common with the factional rivalry that had dominated

Brownsville's politics before the 1870s. In the aftermath of the Mexican American War, Brownsville was isolated from the rest of the country and economically interdependent with Mexico. In this context, local factional rivalry formed the core of political life in Brownsville. By 1874, factional opposition gave way to competition between local branches of the national Republican and Democratic Parties, designated, respectively, by the identifying colors of the city's old factional cliques.

Yet the post-Reconstruction clubs did have one thing in common with their antebellum predecessors: both functioned because the Lower Rio Grande Valley, like the big Northern cities swarming with newly arrived immigrants, had a large exploitable population that could be manipulated at election time. Genuine democracy would only develop in the Lower Rio Grande Valley with the reforms that came in the wake of the Great Depression and the Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. In certain respects, these reforms constituted the unfinished business of Reconstruction.[98] Ironically, in the post-New Deal era, John Ford's beloved Democratic Party would become the champion of legislated social equality. Edmund Davis' Republican Party, on the other hand, would grow to majority status denouncing Great Society programs and calling for a return to state's rights and small government. And with the transformation of the national parties after World War Two, the signification of blue and red would also change in Brownsville and across the country.

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Endnotes

1 *Dallas Herald*, April 8,1863.

2 The capture of Davis in Matamoros, and the hanging of his companion, W.W. Montgomery, is detailed in Vicki Betts, "Private and Amateur Hangings: The Lynching of W.W. Montgomery, March 15, 1863," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 88 (Oct. 1984): 145-66.

3 San Antonio *Herald*, April 11, 1863.

4 For an excellent discussion of how Stillman, King, and Kenedy amassed and used their fortunes, see John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. pp.105-28.

5 Studies that look at Brownsville during Reconstruction from a close, detailed perspective include James R. Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," Master's thesis, Texas Tech University, December 1969; LeRoy P. Graf, "The Economic History of the lower Rio Grande Valley, 1820- 1875." Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, February 1942. James H. Thompson. "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County, Texas." Master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1965; Walter W. Hildebrand, "The History of Cameron County, Texas," Master's thesis, North Texas State College, August 1950.

Studies that take a more distanced perspective include Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877;* James McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Carl H. Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980); Randolph Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); James Marten, *Texas Divided: Loyalty and Dissent in the Lone Star State, 1856-1874* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990).

A work that is distinctive for taking a more integrated perspective of Brownsville's history, before, during, and after Reconstruction, is Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp, *Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1991).

6 My understanding of factionalism in antebellum Brownsville draws on Anthony Knopp, "Early Political Factionalism in Cameron County and Brownsville" *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 12, No. I. Summer 1999, 23-33.

7 In "The Economic History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1820- 1875," LeRoy Graf writes, "Until 1861, the Lower Rio Grande Valley was solely an economic adjunct of Northern Mexico ... At the end of the war, the commerce of Texas and the trans-Mississippi South returned to customary routes through the Gulf ports of Texas and Louisiana, and the temporary route via the Rio Grande fell into disuse. Once again, the economic life of the valley became inextricably and exclusively a part of the economic life of Northern Mexico." p. 590.

8 Knopp, "Early Political Factionalism" p. 24. Frank H. Dugan, "The 1850 Affair of Brownsville Separatists" *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 61 (October 1957) is also helpful in clarifying the legal controversies surrounding the Brownsville Land Company.

9 Kearney & Knopp, *Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville, p.* 68

10 Knopp, "Early Political Factionalism," p. 23.

11 Knopp, "Early Political Factionalism, p.28.

12 Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press. 1979), p.4.

13 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville, p. 114; Thompson, "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County, Texas," p. 38.

14 Knopp, "Early Political Factionalism," p. 29.

15 Kearney & Knopp, *Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville*, p. 82.

16 Ronald N. Gray, "Edmund J. Davis: Radical Republican and Reconstruction Governor of Texas." Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1976. p. 6.

17 *Caller-Times*, (Corpus Christi), August 27, 1939.

18 *The Texan Freemason* (May, 1964), p. 7.

19 *Texas State Gazette* (Austin) November 13, 1856.

20 Gray, "Edmund J. Davis," p. 12.

21 Gray, "Edmund J. Davis," p. 13.

22 E.J. Davis to Stephen Powers, February 10, 1876, *James B. Wells Papers*, U. of TX Archives, Austin

23 Gray, "Edmund J. Davis," p. 385.

24 Thompson, "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County," p. 60.

25 Thompson, "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County," pp. 81-83.

26 Graf, "The Economic History of the lower Rio Grande Valley," pp. 433-4.

27 Robert W. Delaney, "Matamoros, Port for Texas during the Civil War," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LVIII, No. 4, April, 1955; p. 479.

28 Kearney & Knopp, *Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville*, p. 119.

29 A. A. Champion, "Papers and Personalities of Frontier Journalism (1830's to 1890's)" *More Studies in Brownsville History.*, ed. Milo Kearney (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville. 1989), p. 136.

30 John S. Ford, *Rip Ford's TX.* Ed. Stephen Oates. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963. p. 317.

31 *Tri-Weekly Gazette* (Austin), January 12, 1861.

32 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p. 44.

33 Waters S. Davis, quoted in *Galveston Daily News*, October 14, 1873.

34 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p.74.

35 Gray, "Edmund J. Davis," p.31.

36 Walter W. Hildebrand, "The History of Cameron County, Texas." Master's thesis, North Texas State College, August 1950. pp.46-7;

37 David Johnson, "Impact of the Civil War on the Rio Grande" *More Studies in Brownsville History*, ed. Milo Kearney (Brownsville: Pan American University at Brownsville, 1989), p. 192.

38 Tom Lea, *The King Ranch*, II (Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1957), p. 201.

39 Graf, "The Economic History of the lower Rio Grande Valley," p.433.

40 On August 4th, President Lincoln asked Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, to see E.J. Davis and John L. Haynes, a fellow Texas Unionist. Lincoln explained, "They think if we could send 2500 or 3000 arms, in a vessel, to the vicinity of the Rio Grande, that they can find men there who will re-inaugurate the National Authority on the Rio Grande first, and probably on the Nueces also." Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln: The Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois*, V (9 vols.; New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers U. Press, 1953), p. 357.

41 Letter, E.J. Davis to Anne E. Davis, November 7, 1863, quoted in Gray, "Edmund J. Davis," p. 52.

42 The war time exploits of Edmund Davis are described most comprehensively in Gray, "Edmund J. Davis." Chapter Three: "A Soldier in Blue" pp.36-72. Also see Jerry Thompson, *Vaquero in Blue and Gray* (Austin: State House Press, 2000), pp. 90-97.

43 Gray, "Edmund J. Davis," p.69.

44

Daily Ranchero, December 29, 1869.

45 In *Ordeal by Fire*, McPherson points out that for Lincoln, Reconstruction was "restoration rather than revolution." Lincoln wanted to permit pardoned Southern leaders to cushion the shock of the "total revolution of labor" that emancipation had produced. Thus Lincoln hoped blacks and whites would "gradually live themselves out of their old relation to each other." pp.138-39.

46 Gray, "Edmund J. Davis," 101.

47 Gray, "Edmund J. Davis," 101

48 *San Antonio Express*, January 31, 1869.

49 Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas*, p.102.

50 *Daily Austin Republican*, June 17, 1868.

51 *San Antonio Express*, January 31, 1869.

52 W.W. Mills, *Forty Years at El Paso, 1858-1898*, (El Paso: Carl Hertzog, 1962), p.101.

53 For Davis' legislative program, see Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil*, pp.119-22.

54 The disasters that befell the city in the immediate aftermath of defeat are well described in Thompson, "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County," p.104.

55 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p.65

56 Randolph Campbell, *Gone to Texas : A History of the Lone Star State*, p.271.

57 Randolph Campbell, *Gone to Texas : A History of the Lone Star State*, pp.274-76.

58 Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil*, p.69-72.

59 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p.67.

60 Crews points out that during his tenure as governor, Davis "seemed to take a great interest in Brownsville's internal affairs." "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p. 90.

61 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p. 73

62 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p.70

63 Nannie M. Tilley, ed., Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre, 1862-64 (Austin: U. of Texas Press, 1963), p.359.

64 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p.74.

65 A.A. Champion, "Papers and Personalities of Frontier Journalism," p.147.

66 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p.90.

67 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p.89.

68 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p.90.

69 Davis to Powers, October 1, 1874, Wells Collection.

70 Davis complained about Powers in a letter to J.J. Reynolds. E.J. Davis to J.J. Reynolds and to William Scanlan, July 15, 1871, Letter Press Book No. 161, *Governors Papers*. The incident was described by the *New York Times*, August 25, 1871.

71 Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, p. 62

72 A.A. Champion, "Papers and Personalities of Frontier Journalism," pp. 143-4.

73 Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, p. 434.

74 *Daily Ranchero*, January 11, 1870.

75 McAllen to Kingsbury, January 31, 1869, Kingsbury Collection.

76 Charles W. Ramsdell, *Reconstruction in Texas*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1910), p. 317.

77 For the legislative actions taken after the elections of 1871 see Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil War*, pp.184-186.

78 *Standard* (Clarksville), November 15, 1873.

79 Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil*, p.186.

80 For a lucid explanation of the notorious "semi-colon case" see Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil*, p. 198.

81 Ford recounts his actions in Austin between January and April of 1874 in Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, pp. 415-435.

82 Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, p. 416.

83 John Ford, *Unpublished Memoirs*, VII. pp. 1281-2.

84 Oates, *Rip Ford and the Old Southwest* (Normal: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), pp. 253-4.

85 Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, p.329.

86 Oates, *Rip Ford and the Old Southwest.*

87 In *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976) David M. Potter argues that Southern Nationalism (championed by the Democratic Party) emerged in the wake of Reconstruction. He asserts that the Civil War "did far more to produce a southern nationalism which flourished in the cult of the Lost Cause than southern nationalism did to produce the war," p.469. For an excellent study of Southern Nationalism and the tradition of the Lost Cause, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

88 Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, p.435.

89 Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil*, p.116.

90 Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," p.113; Thompson. "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County," p.115-116.

91 Kearney & Knopp, *Boom and Bust*, p.176.

92 One historian, Frank Pierce, has written that during the month of October, 1873, "the two political factions, the reds and blues, were participating in the customary vote-catching bailes (dances) one at the Rio Grande Railroad depot and the other at the city market square..." *A Brief History of the lower Rio Grande Valley*, (George Banta Publishing Co: 1917) p.120. Democrats had divided in 1872 and 1873 into their old Blue and Red factions over the issue of allowing the Rio Grande Railroad to lay tracks on city property. Is it possible that Powers had organized his Democratic club to unite the old factions against the common Republican enemy? Is it possible that what Pierce was describing as factional political gathers were actually gatherings of the new party clubs? The available historical evidence is insufficient to render a clear judgment. The controversy over the Rio Grande Railroad is recounted in Crews, "Reconstruction in Brownsville," pp.103-112 and in Graf, "The Economic History of the lower Rio Grande Valley," pp.685-699.

93 Kearney & Knopp. *Boom and Bust*, p.176.

94 Evan Anders. *Boss Rule in South Texas*, p. 6.

95 Anders. Boss Rule in South Texas, p.7

96 Anders. Boss Rule in South Texas, pp. 4-5.

97 Thompson. "A Nineteenth Century History of Cameron County," pp.114-117.

98 Eric Foner develops this theme in *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877.* See *Epilogue*, pp.602-609.

El Gobierno Municipal de la Heróica Matamoros, Tamaulipas, en 1897

por

Andrés F. Cuéllar

Don Rafael Solís constituye un caso excepcional en nuestra historia local, ya que fue presidente en los años 1892, 1893, 1897, y de 1899 a 1905, once períodos de un año.[1] Pudiéramos decir que fue un producto de la estabilidad que originó la dictadura Porfirista. Sin embargo, en la memoria colectiva no quedó como un dictador. Al contrario, las pocas referencias que hemos escuchado de los mayores, lo mencionan como un buen presidente. Desde que nos enteramos de su existencia, tuvimos la curiosidad de cuáles serían sus actividades en tiempos en que "no pasa nada." Afortunadamente, tenemos la magnífica colección de *Libros de Actas de Cabildo*, de donde tomamos la información.

El año 1897 comenzaba con un ejercicio de relaciones públicas, notificando a todos los municipios tamaulipecos la toma de posesión, y acusando recibo de las de ellos. Así en la sesión del 15 de enero[2] se recibieron nada menos que 27 notificaciones de instalación. Curiosamente, reproducen los municipios de quienes se recibieron, y solo son 26 entre ellos, de Maxiscatzin, Guerrero, C. Guerrero y C. Laredo. En la siguiente, se recibieron cinco más, además de los cónsules, mexicano en Brownsville y de EU en Matamoros.

Otra actividad semejante, pero con fines más prácticos, eran las plantillas de fierros, marcas, ventas y señales de ganado que se intercambiaban. Hemos de decir que, en este caso, sólo Victoria lo envió el 15 de enero. Hubo que esperar hasta marzo para que llegaran Santa Bárbara de Ocampo y N. Morelos; el mes siguiente Soto la Marina; y, en Julio, nuevamente Cd. Victoria, refiriéndose a los fierros registrados en el primer semestre.[3] Hemos de decir que

en un estado donde la ganadería era la riqueza principal, lógico es la difusión de los fierros, ventas, marcas, y señales para identificar el ganado, y así evitar su robo o abigeato. Diremos que con el fierro, su dueño marcaba el ganado que nacía en su propiedad, y con la venta se marcaba a todo animal que vendía, la marca se aplicaba a todo animal que se compraba, y por lo tanto anulaba el fierro de su antiguo dueño, y las señales eran cortes o trozos que se quitaban a las orejas de los animales.

Otra actividad de importancia era la agricultura. En aquellos años del esfuerzo del hombre para obtener de la tierra sus productos, nadie soñaba con tractores, y la modernización de los implementos agrícolas era lenta. Se sembraba principalmente para autoconsumo, ya que el transporte de los productos agrícolas era caro y lento. Sin embargo, parece que nuestro gobierno intuía que estaba por producirse una nueva fuente de ingresos, porque tenía sumo interés en conocer lo producido en nuestro municipio. Lo prueba la circular del 15 de febrero que ordenaba colectar datos sobre las varias producciones agrícolas del municipio. Nuestras autoridades respondieron en una semana, pero no recordaron que se había implantado el sistema métrico decimal, y los datos los enviaron en fanegas, almudes, y otras medidas antiguas, por lo que el informe fue regresado para transformar las medidas antiguas en el moderno sistema métrico que nadie usaba.[4]

Dos meses después, el 28 de mayo, el gobierno requiere nuevamente conocer la producción agrícola, enviando unas boletas especiales con otro de la misma superioridad, acompañando "para recoger datos sobre producciones agrícolas, recomendando la pronta remisión de dichos datos."[5] Una semana después, nuestro cumplido municipio enviaba a la Secretaría de Industria, Comercio y Agricultura la información requerida, y, un mes después, recibían del gobierno del Estado la aceptación del informe. Aún faltaba la más importante: la circular 83, la cual debió ser más extensa y aseguraba "que sean llenados convenientemente (los) esqueletos de las boletas estadísticas que deben figurar en los anuarios estadísticos de la República."[6]

Una de las instituciones más dinámicas del municipio era el Hospital Civil, que, al inicio de la administración, debió estar en crisis, pues, en la primera sesión del 15 de enero, su director se quejaba de que las medidas del año anterior habían reducido "a 15 centavos diarios por plaza lo presupuestado para alimentos y medicinas de los enfermos,"[7] y aseguraba que no alcanzaba. Este problema debió llevar a la renuncia del administrador, porque, el 5 de marzo, el cabildo recibió "dos instancias de los C. Lucio Ledezma y Alfredo Arzamendi, solicitando las Plazas de Administrador y Ayudante del Hospital Civil, que interinamente desempeñan"[8] que nuestro atento cabildo resolvió "como lo solicitan."

No dice si los solicitantes eran médicos, como lo indica la lógica, y debieron ser muy buenos administradores, porque nunca faltaba su informe mensual. Para el 26 de marzo, el cabildo debió emocionarse al recibir la información de que iniciarían: "la reconstrucción de una enfermería para mejoras en el referido establecimiento; cuyo costo según presupuesto será el de $500.00, de cuya suma tenía en caja la mayor parte como producto de las economías hechas en el repetido establecimiento; y el resto o saldo lo cubriría el mismo Señor Director con las mismas economías que seguiría haciendo, o con algunos donativos que agenciara entre algunas personas filantrópicas de la localidad."[9] A tan noble función se sumó el Gobierno del Estado, encabezado por Don Guadalupe Mainero, que aportó la cantidad de $100.00 en dos mensualidades de $50.00. Aunque en los planes de los administradores no estaba la colaboración del municipio, éste endosó un vale por $92.36 a la casa de los Sres. J. G. y M. H. Cross, que el cabildo acordó pagar "en cuartas partes." La prestigiada maestra "Sra. Eduviges Celhay Vda. de González Gascue, Directora de la Escuela Normal para profesoras, adjunta tres listas de los objetos regalados al Hospital por las alumnas de la Escuela Normal y anexa y algunas Señoras y Señoritas de esta Sociedad para la sala de mujeres que se inaugurará en el Hospital Civil el 4 de Mayo próximo."[10] Como podemos ver, se reconstruyó la enfermería en el departamento de mujeres con mobiliario suficiente. Esa sala se inauguró el día 4 de

mayo, que coincidía con el "advenimiento" cumpleaños del padre del Sr. Gobernador Lic. Guadalupe Mainero.

Otra de las importantes satisfacciones de los administradores se presentó en la sesión del viernes 10 de septiembre, donde informaban "que con fecha 1° del actual dirige al Director del Hospital Civil con motivo de la visita que con intervención de la Presidencia de este R. Cuerpo practicó al referido Establecimiento manifestándole que los libros y Cortes de Caja Mensuales, fueron encontrados en perfecto orden de conformidad con las disposiciones del Reglamento Interior ... aunque la inspección de las salas de enfermos, botiquín y demás objetos pertenecientes al Hospital, tal vez no sea de su competencia, se hizo por juzgarlo de oportunidad y le cabe la satisfacción de manifestar como resultado de esa visita, el haber encontrado todo en perfecto orden de estado y limpieza que honra a la Dirección."[11]

Claro que como buenos burócratas tenían que encontrar un pelo en la sopa, y recomendaron "al Director que procure por legalizar los libros con la intervención en ellos del Presidente Municipal y que se abra el de cuentas corrientes para consignar en él las cuentas de los empleados, abonándoseles la dotación de Presupuesto y cargándoseles lo que reciben según las nóminas pagadas por la Tesorería."[12] A partir de entonces, los informes mensuales fueron rutinarios e infaltables.

Todo pueblo requiere de una cárcel como absoluta necesidad para aplicar la ley, en el caso de Matamoros ubicada en la planta baja. El año comienza con el informe del Alcalde de que la aportación llamada estancia de presos, que consistía en 12 centavos diarios por interno, no le era suficiente por lo que solicita el clásico aumento, pero la comisión responsable realizó un estudio del costo de los artículos de primera necesidad y consideró que los 12 centavos eran suficiente.[13] Recordemos que en el hospital con 15 centavos diarios se atendía a los enfermos y se les compraba las medicinas.

En la sesión del 13 de agosto el alcalde informa la muerte del alcaide de la cárcel, y su familia quedó sin recursos para el entierro, por lo

que se acuerda que la tesorería le abone $25.00 por cuenta de sus liquidaciones[14]. Fue sustituido en forma interina por el Gendarme Francisco Solís y, a partir de septiembre, por José F. Medrano, quien para tomar posesión debió primero depositar una fianza por $200.00.

El domingo 12 de agosto se presentó una de las clásicas avenidas del río, y hubo necesidad de reforzar urgentemente las obras de defensa, para lo cual se echó mano de los presos. Para que trabajaran con más gusto se les prometió una gratificación al terminar. El 1 de septiembre, el Sr. Ángel R. Zapata informa haber concluido los trabajos. No dice lo que gastó, pero sí que le sobraron $11.69, y el presidente solicita repartirlos entre los presos que colaboraron con tan noble obra[15].

El agua es una amenaza cuando sobra y una necesidad vital cuando falta. El 21 de agosto, en plena canícula, el C. Presidente manifestó "haber recibido repetidas quejas de los abusos que cometen los expendedores de agua, pues éstos han subido el precio de cada barril al doble de lo que antes lo vendían. Resiente gran perjuicio la clase menesterosa, por lo que creía conveniente se nombrara una comisión que estudiara la manera de poner un correctivo a esos abusos, o proponer el medio de aliviar las necesidades de la población en ese respecto."[16] Se acordó nombrar la clásica comisión integrada por los Señores Chapa, Garza, Betancourt, y G. Ramírez. El problema debieron solucionarlo rápidamente porque no se mencionó en ninguna otra ocasión.

El municipio demostraba su preocupación "con los que menos tienen" cuando, el 9 de julio, el Presidente informó "haber quedado concluida la reparación de la Carroza para la conducción al Cementerio de cadáveres de los pobres de solemnidad, manifestando que mandó publicar avisos en los periódicos de la localidad, poniéndola gratuitamente a disposición de las personas que pudieren necesitarla."[17] El 23 de julio, se recibió una circular comunicando un devastador sismo en el Istmo de Tehuantepec y la necesidad de hacer colectas entre los empleados de las oficinas,

los oficiales de la 4ª Zona Militar, y las organizaciones de señoras y señoritas sin faltar la destacada maestra Eduviges Celhay.[18]

En esa época, los caminos eran responsabilidad del municipio, y es lógico que en materia tan importante se presenten problemas de diversa índole. Un ejemplo es el presentado por el 2° regidor Señor Cárdenas, quién expuso el 21 de mayo "que algunos vecinos de los ranchos del Caracol, La Escondida, Las Flores, Guadalupe, El Alto, El Evanito, y otros de la Sección 20 se quejan de que el C. Benigno Treviño ha obstruido con la cerca de un potrero el camino antiguo que pasa por el rancho de La Reforma y se extiende hacia el llano, ocasionándoles con eso el perjuicio de pasar por otro camino que en tiempo de lluvias se hace intransitable, y el de recorrer mayor distancia que antes para comunicarse entre si o venir a la Ciudad.[19]" Nuestro sensible cabildo "nombró una comisión compuesta del informante y del 5° Regidor Sr. Garza Ramírez, para que informe con conocimiento de los hechos que motivan la queja de los vecinos aludidos.[20]"

La comisión demostró una eficiencia excepcional, pues una semana después fue la siguiente sesión del cabildo, y, el 28 de mayo, rinde su informe y da la solución: "Con un informe de los Sres. Cárdenas y Garza Ramírez, relativo a la queja de los vecinos de la Sección 20ª fundada en los perjuicios que éstos dicen resentir por haber obstruido el C. Benigno Treviño con la cerca de un potrero el camino que conduce al Rancho de La Reforma y se extiende hacia el llano, en el cual informe se dice ser cierto lo que exponen los quejosos y que el referido Sr. Treviño manifestó estar dispuesto a abrir dos puertas en dicho potrero, una frente a los Ranchos Los Artesanos y Las Murallas y la otra al fondo del mismo potrero que da al llano."[21] El cabildo solo acordó verificar cuanto antes el acuerdo para evitar perjuicios a los quejosos.

En aquellos tiempos en que el transporte se hacía en animales y carretas, asegurar la viabilidad en época de lluvia no era nada fácil, pues nuestra región carece de piedras y de madera suficiente para el pavimento, aunque en algunas calles se utilizaron troncos

de mezquite. Ya se fabricaba ladrillo, pero su costo era tan alto que era difícil que el municipio tuviera los fondos necesarios para arreglar las calles. El 7 de mayo, acordó ordenar al tren de limpieza que recogieron "ladrillos y tierra sobrantes en la vía pública para aseo de las calles principales y recompostura de otras."[22] Ese valioso material debería depositarse en los puntos que requiriesen compostura, principalmente en el puente de los esteros ya que en tiempos de calor es muy usado por las familias que van de paseo al río.

Los puentes eran una necesidad, y a veces la falta de recursos impedía que se terminara. El 21 de mayo, el ameritado poeta José Arrese, 8° regidor del municipio, solicitó "la necesidad de que cuanto antes se construyera un puente a inmediaciones de la Garita de Puertas Verdes, frente a la labor del C. Gregorio Ortega, en donde con anterioridad se han hecho trabajos de terracería para ese objeto y los cuales están siendo causa del estancamiento de las aguas en esa parte del camino y de los perjuicios consiguientes de los transeúntes."[23]

Para el 28 de mayo, la eficiente comisión de Mejoras Materiales informaba que habían recabado la opinión del Ingeniero Manuel M. Mendiola. Esa era "que en obvio de gastos y dadas las condiciones del terreno, bastaría para dar salida a las aguas que se estancan en ese punto, abrir una alcantarilla con su correspondiente terraplén, en la cual se erogará un gasto relativamente pequeño al que puede importar el puente, con los mismos resultados que éste."[24] La solución parece lógica, y, por supuesto, que contó con la aprobación del cabildo. Pero algo sucedió, porque, en la sesión del 27 de agosto, el cabildo acordó "el gasto de $15.60 que importaron 52 durmientes para el Puente de la Garita de Puertas Verdes."[25] Así fue que triunfó la opción del puente en la garita de Puertas Verdes.

Éstos eran tan necesarios que, el 17 de septiembre, "se autorizó a la Comisión de Mejoras Materiales para que pida presupuestos y mande construir un puente en el desemboque de la laguna conocida

con el nombre de Cabras Pintas, cuyo gasto se hará del fondo de Mejoras Materiales."[26] Y, para el 22 de octubre, acordaron una aportación nada menos que de $470.00 para el puente que se construye en Cabras Pintas.[27] Ya próximo a concluir su período, el 26 de noviembre, una orgullosa Comisión de Mejoras Materiales informaba que la obra estaba concluida, y el costo había sido de $434.65.

En la herencia urbana española que México conserva está la importancia de las plazas. En el caso de Matamoros son de gran tradición la Plaza Hidalgo (también llamada Plaza de Armas o Principal) y la Plaza Allende. Desde un principio, dividió a los matamorenses más pobres que vivían en el Barrio de Arriba que se reunían en la plaza Allende y a tres cuadras de distancia se reunían los de mayores recursos en la Hidalgo. El 18 de junio, el Presidente informa que ya había platicado con algunos regidores sobre la conveniencia de hacer un kiosco en la Plaza Allende. La idea no se la sacó de la manga, pues ya tenía un plano hecho por el Sr. Luis del Cueto y un presupuesto de $600.00. Para ello la Comisión de Mejoras Materiales ya disponía de $400.00, y había solicitado a Don Alfredo Passament para que realizara una colecta pública "entre sus numerosos amigos" para obtener los $200.00 restantes. La idea fue aprobada.[28] Don Alfredo se propuso no molestar a sus numerosos amigos, sino que organizó dos funciones de acróbatas, y, para el 23 de julio, la Comisión de Hacienda informaba haber recibido $206.51. Don Alfredo tuvo el don de atinarle a la cantidad que necesitaba el municipio.[29]

Para el 10 de septiembre, el kiosco estaba por terminarse, y Don Rafael debió sentirse entusiasmado, pues solicitó la aprobación de un gasto de $64.00 para mandar hacer 16 postes incluyendo las armazones para colocar faroles en la Plaza Allende, y por si no fuera suficiente $11.00 extra para comprar una pieza de mármol con la inscripción correspondiente a la inauguración del kiosco.[30] Esta obra debió dejar muy satisfecho al cabildo, porque fue motivos de dos comunicados, uno participando haber iniciado la obra y otro haberlo inaugurado el 14 de septiembre. Ambos

comunicados merecieron pronta respuesta del Señor Gobernador Lic. Guadalupe Mainero, que expresaba su satisfacción. Resultó que la comisión de Mejorar Materiales informaba en octubre que había organizado una "jamaica" en la Plaza Allende, que había producido nada menos que $870.00, y el cabildo acordó dedicar la mitad $400.00 a educación, como era su obligación, y el resto al Puente de Cabras Pintas que ya mencionamos.

El 4 de junio, cuando se iniciaba la temporada de lluvias, el presidente se enteró que nuestros vecinos estaban construyendo una estacada en la curva próxima a Los Tomates, que violaba el acuerdo de límites y aguas firmado apenas en 1894. Se informó por telégrafo a la Comisión que tenía sede en Cd. Juárez, y, después de inspecciones del Tnte. Coronel Emiliano Corella Ingeniero, consular de la repetida comisión, llegaron al acuerdo que no violaba los tratados.[31]

Ese año, se hicieron los trabajos preliminares para la construcción del ferrocarril de San Miguel de Camargo a Camargo, Mier, Cerralvo, y Monterrey. Para el objeto, el Señor Gobernador comisionó al Sr. Antonio Dastigue para conmar una junta que colocara acciones para dicho proyecto, y el 26 de marzo informaban que ya habían colocado 200 acciones.

Diremos que, como consecuencia de las leyes de Reforma que prohibía la propiedad comunal, el ejido de Matamoros "una legua a los cuatro vientos partiendo de la Plaza Principal" debió repartirse por lo que en casi todas las sesiones alguien solicita un terreno del ejido. Este no siempre procedieron, como el que solicitó el Sr. Marínez Cáceres, donde la aduana dictó que a partir del río había cierta distancia que no se podía otorgar a particulares pues se necesitaba para combatir el contrabando.[32]

Un hechote que trasciende hasta nuestros días sucedió en la sesión del 1 de octubre, cuando un grupo de vecinos "enviaron una petición ... proponiendo al R. Ayuntamiento que, como un testimonio de gratitud a los méritos del eminente caudillo fronterizo Gral. Manuel González y para perpetuar su memoria, se dé a la

calle de comercio, única que en la actualidad está sin el nombre de algún patriota, el de "Calle del Gral. Manuel González." Se acordó de conformidad, autorizándose a la comisión de ornato para que mande hacer las placas respectivas para colocarlas en sustitución de los que actualmente existen".[33]

Para las fiestas públicas el ayuntamiento organizaba la Junta Patriótica, que en este año estuvo formada por el Sr. Gral. Lauro Cavazos como presidente, Vice-Presidente el Sr. Julio Olivo, y 1er Vocal el Sr. Fructuoso Dávila. El primer festejo fue el 5 de mayo. La junta pidió la colaboración del municipio, que tuvo a bien aportar $20.00. El gasto principal de dicha fiesta fue de $160.00 en faroles, que el municipio podría utilizar cuando se necesita poner alumbrado extraordinario. Finalmente, el 10 de septiembre, solicita nuevamente la colaboración del municipio "para la solemnización del LXXXVII Aniversario del glorioso grito de nuestra Independencia."[34]

Sin embargo, la fiesta del año debió ser, sin lugar a dudas, la visita que en mayo realizó el Señor Gobernador Don Guadalupe Mainero a nuestra ciudad. Para el caso la Camara de Comercio y el ayuntamiento unieron sus esfuerzos para organizar "una recepción digna del elevado puesto que ocupa." Así una comisión compuesta por las personas más destacadas del comercio, integradas los Sres. Melitón H. Cross, Emilio Benevendo, Lorenzo Garibay, y el Presidente y Secretario de la referida Cámara Sres. G. M. Raphael y Baldomero Urtusástegui, se presentarían, el 15 de mayo, para que, unidos al cabildo, se invitaría al Sr. Gral. Jefe de la 4ª Zona Militar y su Estado Mayor, Empleados Federales y del Estado, y demás personas que deban ir en la comitiva. Tomarán el tren expreso preparado especialmente para la ocasión hasta Estación Rosita, donde recibirían al distinguido huésped. Por la noche, se le ofrecería una serenata y un banquete en el Teatro Reforma, que sería ofrecido por el destacado poeta y regidor del ayuntamiento Don José Arrese.[35]

El año termina prácticamente el segundo domingo de diciembre, fecha de las elecciones de las nuevas autoridades. Para el caso, cada año, había que elaborar un nuevo padrón electoral, para lo cual se nombraba una comisión de dos personas en cada una de las 25 secciones que tenía Matamoros. Por supuesto que todos eran hombres. Nadie se imaginaba en que una mujer pudiera desempeñar tan delicada comisión. El complaciente cabildo autorizó el gasto de $9.00 importe de tres resmas papel para la impresión de credenciales de los votantes y $10.00 para proveer de útiles de escritorio a los comisionados. Como no se menciona otro gasto, cuesta trabajo pensar que con $19.00 se organicen las elecciones.[36]

Vemos como los problemas principales de la ciudad era la vialidad, que a su vez dependía mucho de las lluvias e inundaciones. A pesar de los pocos ingresos, el municipio era responsable de la educación y de la salud, y se esforzaba por hacerlo lo mejor posible. Aunque el estado no debió tener muchos recursos, y menos Don Guadalupe Mainero, que tuvo que empeñar su casa para hacer una obra, a la hora de su visita los matamorenses echaron la casa por la ventana, como que siempre hemos creído que el poder resolverá nuestros problemas y no la organización y el esfuerzo de nosotros mismos.

Cronista de Matamoros

Notas

1 Muchas gracias a la Señora Elia García Cruz por su ayuda con el español usado en este artículo y en todos los artículos en español.

2 *Libro de Actas de Cabildo 1896 – 1904,* Pag 19. en lo sucesivo *LAC 1896.*

3 *LAC 1896,* Pag 51.

4 *LAC 1896,* Pag 30.

5 *LAC 1896,* Pag 44.

6 *LAC 1896,* Pag 56.

7 *LAC 1896,* Pag 18.

8 *LAC 1896,* Pag 22.

9 *LAC 1896,* Pag 32.

10 *LAC 1896,* Pag 35

11 *LAC 1896,* Pag 64.

12 *LAC 1896,* Pag 64.

13 *LAC 1896,* Pag 19

14 *LAC 1896,* Pag 57.

15 *LAC 1896,* Pag 72

16 *LAC 1896,* Pag 58.

17 *LAC 1896,* Pag 53.

18 *LAC 1896,* Pag 54.

19 *LAC 1896,* Pag 43.

20 *LAC 1896,* Pag 43.

21 *LAC 1896,* Psg 44.

22 *LAC 1896,* Pag 39.

23 *LAC 1896,* Pag 43.

24 *LAC 1896,* Pag 45.

25 *LAC 1896,* Pag 61.

26 *LAC 1896,* Pag 67.

27 *LAC 1896,* Pag 76.

28 *LAC 1896,* Pag 48.

29 *LAC 1896,* Pag 54.

30 *LAC 1896,* Pag 66.

31 *LAC 1896,* Pag 47.

32 *LAC 1896,* Pag 34.

33 *LAC 1896,* Pag 70.

34 *LAC 1896,* Pag 65.

35 *LAC 1896,* Pag 41.

36 *LAC 1896,* Pag 76.

The Brownsville Historical Association's First Sixty Years

by

Anthony Knopp

The Brownsville Historical Association would like to lay claim to being the oldest active historical organization in the Rio Grand Valley, so this notice should serve as a challenge to possible rival claimants. We are unaware of any.

Not surprisingly, over the years of its existence members of the BHA have endeavored to record the history of the Valley's premier historical organization. Much of the information comes from records kept by Mrs. Harbert Davenport and Ruby Wooldridge.

Apparently the Centennial of Texas Independence in 1936 proved to be the stimulus for increased public interest in historic preservation. Members of the Cameron County Centennial Committee met in early 1946 to organize the Brownsville Historical Association; a charter application was approved by the Texas Secretary of State on January 28, 1947. The objectives of the BHA in those early days included preservation of Brownsville area history and landmarks, especially the home of the city's founder. Officers elected at the first meeting were: J.T. Canales, President; Mrs. J.K. Wells, Vice President; Mrs. Harbert Davenport, Secretary; and Guy G. Bevil, Treasurer.

The new organization tackled several projects during its first few years, including designing and ordering Brownsville Centennial plates, helping to mark the Oblate Trail for the Oblate Centennial, and providing the city with a copy of the original contract for the construction of the city market. Mrs. Davenport wrote a pamphlet on "Historic Spots In and Around Brownsville." But the BHA encountered obstacles and frustration as well. The organization tried unsuccessfully to purchase the old Opera House and urged

the city to preserve the Fort Brown Quarter Master's Fence, but both were ultimately demolished.

In 1951, the BHA obtained a 25-year lease for use of the "Little Chapel" (Building #2 at Fort Brown) as a museum and meeting place. The building provided a home for historic artifacts pertaining to Brownsville's history which were donated by local citizens.

The Association was actively involved in the preparations for the new Jacob Brown Memorial Civic Center, providing historical information for talks, inscriptions, and the auditorium mural. The BHA held an open house at the museum in conjunction with the dedication of the complex on January 24, 1954. The Association continued to provide historical information to local radio and television stations as well as to the Brownsville *Herald*.

The BHA took the initiative in publishing historic information. Mrs. Davenport researched much of the material for Chauncey Stillman's book on Charles Stillman, and the Association reprinted *The Twin Cities of the Border* (1893), an essential primary source on early Brownsville History.

In 1950, the BHA became interested in purchasing the Abelardo Treviño home, which had been constructed by Henry Miller and occupied for a time by Charles Stillman and family. Chauncey Stillman (a grandson of Charles) was persuaded by Mayor H.L. Stokely and the BHA to purchase the house and deed it to the Association. The Stillman family contributed furnishings and furniture, restoration began, and Concepción "Kino" Camarillo was named custodian. The Stillman House Museum opened in January, 1961. Kino lived in the small apartment behind the garden and provided tours to appreciative visitors into the new century. The annual award for outstanding contributions to historic knowledge and preservation in Brownsville is known as the "Kino."

Dissemination of information has long been a major focus of the BHA. In 1975 the Association and the city funded the *Architectural/*

Historical Survey and Preservation Plan by Ellen Beasley. This survey prompted the Association to engage Betty Bay, who produced *Historic Brownsville: Original Townsite Guide* in 1980. The crowning achievement in publishing came in 1982, when *Brownsville: A Pictorial History* first made its appearance. The book was co-authored by BHA President Bob Vezzetti and past President Ruby Wooldridge. These two had assumed the reins of leadership of the Association from the era of J.T. Canales and Mrs. Davenport. Vezzetti initiated and single-handedly (for many years) produced the BHA "Newsletter," long the unique means of contact with membership. Later, Vezzetti edited items from the "Newsletter," plus others from the archives in order to compile *Tidbits*. In 1996, Rita Krausse and Don Clifford edited a collection of archival items which appeared as *A Blast From the Past*. All of the publications mentioned are still available at the Heritage Museum gift shop. Additional Association activities during this era included fashion shows of antique clothing, cooperation with the city in placing historic markers, and the establishment of Historic Brownsville Week.

Beginning with Chauncey Stillman's contribution of the Stillman House, the Stillman family has provided essential support for the expansion of facilities. Guy and Dr. James Stillman led the family in establishing the Stillman House Trust, which served as the conduit for the family's generosity. Catherine Stillman and later generations have continued their involvement and contributions.

It was a 1988 contribution for the Homeland Foundation, a Stillman-related charitable organization, which enabled the first facility expansion. In 1990, the BHA restored an historic masonry building in close proximity to the Stillman House to serve as the Brownsville Heritage Resource Center for archival housing and research. It was essential to develop such a facility, since for many years the BHA archives had resided under a bed in Ruby Wooldridge's home. An entire room in the Resource Center was devoted to a collection of the life's work of A.A. Champion, long known as the chronicler of local history. The lot between the Stillman House and the Resource Center was occupied by

an export business; after lengthy negotiations, the building was finally acquired, and, after remodeling, it opened in 2002 as the Brownsville Heritage Museum, primarily as a showcase for the Association's extensive collection of historic photographs. In 2004, the space between the museum and the Resource Center was developed as a lecture hall and exhibition room and named for long-time Brownsville historian Bruce Aiken, who had served as the primary "resource" of the Resource Center for several years prior to his death.

All of the BHA facilities are now owned by the City of Brownsville and are operated by the Association under a nominal long-term lease agreement. In late 2006, the City authorized the Association to establish a Historic City Cemetery Center in the former baggage room of the Southern Pacific Depot. Negotiations are underway for the Association to establish a multi-purpose historical and cultural operation in the old City Market/City Hall building.

A dramatic increase in programs and exhibits (ranging from the frequent book signings through summer programs for children to *Día de los Muertos* displays and presentations) has accompanied the expansion of the facilities. A progressive Board of Directors and the employment of talented administrators and other personnel have been catalysts for this growth. The expansion of facilities alone necessitated additional employment. The chief administrators in turn (with various changing titles) have been Don Clifford, Rosalinda Gonzalez, Rita Krausse and Carmen Zacarias. The incumbent Executive Director is Priscilla Rodriguez, now in her second year.

BHA members may justifiably take pride in the outstanding accomplishments of their organization on its sixtieth anniversary.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Sources

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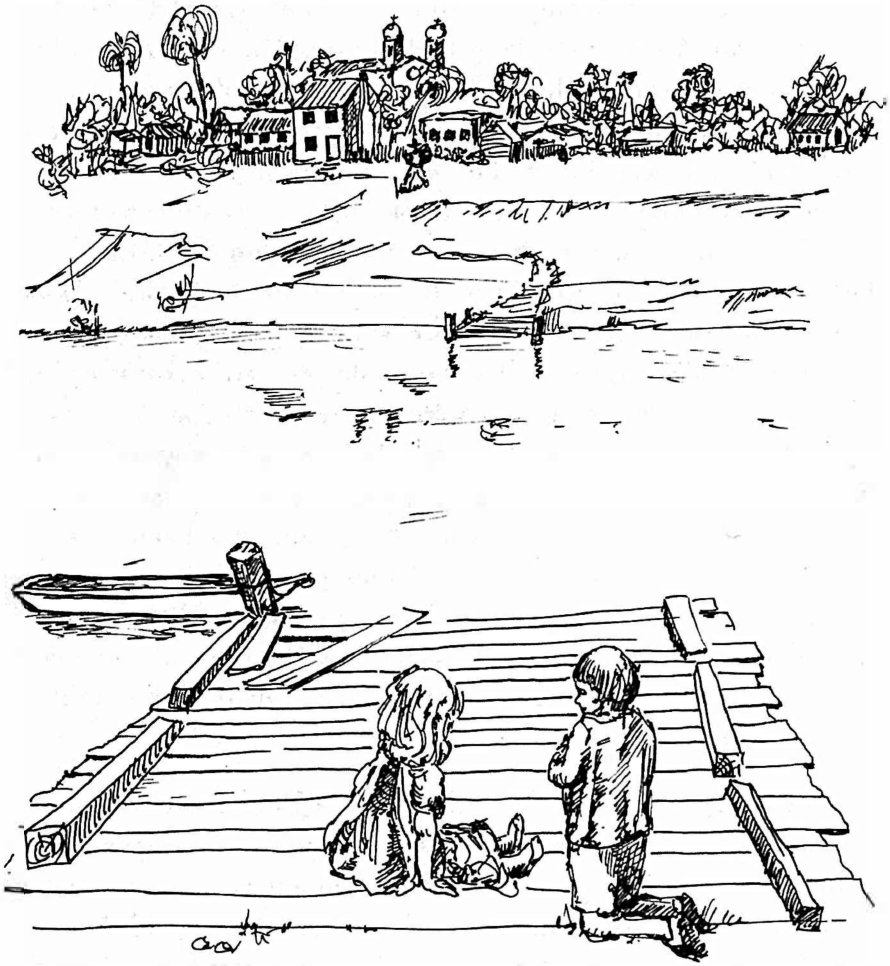
FAMILY HISTORY

Los Dos Niños (The Two Children)

Gathered by Peter Gawenda



Sometimes, mostly in the evening, one can observe two children sitting on the bank of the Rio Grande where the ferry crossing used to be between the two cities of Brownsville and Matamoros. The two very young children quietly sit on the grass and stare across the river. Only when the church bells of the cathedral in Matamoros sound the *Ave Maria* at eight o'clock in the evening do

the children seem to get restless and stand up. But if you are not close enough you really can't see what happens to them.

An elderly man who used to visit the library in the early eighties was reminiscing that he used to sit on the bank of the Rio Grande back in 1950. An Army Officer had notified him that his son had been killed in Korea. He said that at this time he was tired of living. His wife had died the year before, and then his son and only child had been killed. He would stare into the water, not realizing that two children had been sitting next to him for several days. When he finally made up his mind to jump into the water, the little boy walked up to him and said something like: "*Quiero ver mi granpapa.*" The man bent down to the boy and asked him where his grandfather was. The boy only pointed across the river to Matamoros. The man then told him that he could walk with the children across the bridge. But the boy only responded that there was no bridge. Only then did the man realize that the two children were dressed in clothing that must have been from an earlier period. The man then said that he sat down again and changed his mind about ending his life. He also said that he only saw the children years later, the day before he got married again, and, shortly after, he had another son. He felt that the children had not aged.

A young couple strolling along the bank in 1965 also encountered the two children. When asking what they were doing so close to the river, the boy gave them the same answer: "*Quiero ver mi granpapa.*" The couple asked them also where the grandfather was and then where their mother was. The boy pointed across the river to Matamoros. The couple felt very odd because the children seemed too close to the river. They told the children to go back up on the bank and use the bridge to cross. But the little boy just answered that there was no bridge. The couple continued walking, and when the girl turned around, she thought that she saw the two children floating on top of the water and then dissolving into thin air. The couple, who had gotten married and aged quite a bit, told

the story in the City Library in the late nineties. They didn't like to tell their experience because people would laugh at them.

An elderly Matamoros resident told a similar story. He explained that, before the old bridge across the Rio Grande was built, there used to be a boat crossing. For several years, his grandfather had sometimes observed two children sitting on the ramp of the American side. Always, at the sound of the evening bells, the children would get up and somehow float on the water and then disappear in the river. But there was no movement in the water, no ripples or circles, and the water always remained very still. He said that his grandfather took him several times to the spot, and one time he saw the two children. According to the grandfather the children had never aged. When he took his son to the same spot in the sixties, he saw the children again, but his son didn't.

Remembering the Tandys

by

James W. Mills

A billion dollar dynasty has ties to Brownsville, TX. It began with Alfred Nathaniel Tandy who was born in Kentucky in 1859 and moved to Texas in the late 1880's with his wife, Tuella Temple, a native of Tennessee. They settled for a while on a farm near the town of Meridian, in Bosque County, not far from Waco, where Alfred made a living as a merchant, cattleman, and cotton farmer. The couple had three sons; Clyde, David, and Cleve, all of whom were born in Texas.[1] In 1907, the Tandy's moved to Brownsville, and bought land north of town in an area that became known as Tandy Road. Here the family excelled in farming, a business which expanded to Los Fresnos, including cotton gins and a profitable vegetable exporting business.

All three sons did well. In 1933, Clyde Tandy established the Port Fertilizer and Chemical Company. He had one son, Clyde, Jr., who was affectionately known as "Happy" Tandy. Happy and his wife Madge had three children; Charles, Lizette, and Alycia, all of whom currently live in Georgetown, Texas. David Tandy didn't take to the life of a farmer, and moved to Fort Worth, where he became a successful businessman, and married Carmen (McLain). In 1919, David Tandy became a partner in the Fort Worth-based Hinckley-(Tandy) wholesale company, which supplied leather to hospitals, schools, army posts, and prisons.

David's son, Charles D. Tandy, was born in Brownsville in 1918. Charles graduated from Texas Christian University in 1940, attended Harvard University from 1940 to 1941, and then served as an officer in the United States Navy from 1941 to 1947. After his military service, Charles joined his father in the leather business, and helped to establish a mail-order catalog which sold

leather-craft kits. He eventually bought out his father's partner, and the business was re-named General American Industries, Inc. In 1960, due to declining sales, Charles Tandy consolidated the business, and moved the headquarters to New York under the new name, Tandy Corporation. In 1963, be bought out a little-known company from Boston called Radio Shack, which at the time consisted of nine stores.[2] Charles proved to be an able businessman, and the small chain of retail stores flourished. By the end of 1963, he realized an annual sales margin of $20 million. Tandy offered his managers a stake in the company's success by offering profit-sharing. His advertising campaigns promoted the popular jingle "It Takes Two to Tandy." In 1969, Charles Tandy married Anne Valliant Burnett, the granddaughter and sole heir of Samuel Burk Burnett, who had established the famed multi-million dollar Four Sixes Ranch in northern Texas.[3] By 1978, the Tandy Corporation was a billion-dollar enterprise with more than seven thousand retail Radio Shack and Tex Tan leather goods stores with headquarters at the Tandy Center in Fort Worth.

The third and youngest son of Alfred and Tuella Tandy was Cleve. He was thirteen when the family had responded to aggressive advertising of the "magic" Rio Grande Valley, and bought land north of Brownsville. As a young man, Cleve helped his father and his brother Clyde grow onions and cotton. Cleve lived almost his entire life in the Brownsville area, leaving the Valley for only a few years, first serving as a private secretary and Spanish interpreter for a large American cattle firm in Cartagena, Colombia, and then serving briefly in World War I. In 1920, he married Evelyn French of Fort Worth. The couple had one daughter, Elizabeth Ann.[4]

Alfred, along with Clyde and Cleve, established the firm of A.N. Tandy & Sons, and became successful shippers of vegetable crops, including onions, cabbage, and potatoes. By 1928, Cleve had bought three cotton gins, and, later that year, organized the Los Fresnos State Bank with a starting capital of $45,000. He remained its president until 1949. A few years later, he served as a director of the Pan American Bank in Brownsville. Cleve Tandy

also served as a deacon, elder, and Sunday school teacher at the Brownsville Presbyterian Church, as well as singing in the choir for thirty years. He supported the Boy Scouts of America, and for two years served as president of the Rio Grande Valley Council of Boy Scouts. He also served on the Board of Directors for the Dolly Vinsant Memorial Hospital in San Benito, as well as being a member of the Cameron County Tuberculosis Association and Chairman of the Valley Cotton Association. Cleve was a member of the Rotary Club for twenty years, serving for a while as its president.[5]

Cleve Tandy was on the district board of the Brownsville Independent School District for fourteen years, and also helped Texas Southmost College become an independent college. He was the first president of the Board of Trustees of Texas Southmost College, and served in that capacity for five years. In 1958, eleven months after his death, the Cleve Tandy Liberal Arts Building at Texas Southmost College was named in his honor.[6]

Although there are no members of the Tandy family currently living in Brownsville, their name is remembered. At the University of Texas at Brownsville, student classrooms and administrative offices occupy the Tandy Building. Tandy Road is still traveled north of town. So, Brownsvillites, the next time you visit a Radio Shack, remember the Brownsville Tandys.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1 Telephone interview with Douglas C. Earley, 8 Aug. 2006.

2 Kleiner, Diana J. "Charles David Tandy." *The Handbook of Texas*, Vol. 6, 199-200.

3 "Anne Burnett Tandy." *Texas Highways*, December 2002, 23. The Four Sixes Ranch was the inspiration for the 1956 Hollywood classic "Giant" starring Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor, and James Dean in his last film appearance.

4 Richardson, Welch. "Cleve Tandy: Cotton Farmer." *The Border Scope*, 1945, 4, 12. Elizabeth Ann married Douglas C. Earley and the couple had three children; Judd,

Cleve, and Annalyn Earley.

5 Anonymous author, "Cleve H. Tandy." Type-written manuscript, vertical file in the Hunter Room of the Arnulfo O. Oliveira Library.

6 Dedication program for the Cleve Tandy Liberal Arts Building held at the Jacob Brown Auditorium 29, Aug. 1958; Carl S. Chilton, Jr., *The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College: The First 70 Years* (Brownsville, Texas: The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, 1996), 30, 37.

"Tell Them Who You Are" Honoring Pioneer Families of El Rio Bravo del Norte

by

Antonio Noé Zavaleta

The history of Northeastern Mexico and South Texas is one of struggle for survival against Indian predations in an unforgiving environment where the few pioneering Spanish families necessarily intermarried. The harsh existence claimed many lives, but the survivors settled along the *Rio Bravo* and *Camino Real* ("King's Highway").[1]

Four hundred years after the arrival of the first families, we have still failed to recognize and properly honor the accomplishment of these brave founders and their place in Texas history. For the most part, we do not recognize our family relationships with them. We have failed to document or communicate our rich heritage or to pass on this critical information to our children. We have failed our ancestors by not remembering who they were and how we are related to their descendants, our cousins or *primos*.[2] History has overlooked the many hundreds of families and thousands of individuals who struggled to build this unique region of the U.S.-Mexico borderland.

If we assume that, on the average, there are twenty years between human generations, by the time a person reaches the age of twenty, the next generation is being born. Beginning at the time of the Spanish arrival in Mexico around 1520, the years from 1520 to the year 2000 constitute approximately twenty-five human generations. If each individual in any generation has two parents and four grandparents, the next generation, will double the number of great grandparents to eight. The following generation will have sixteen great-great-grandparents and so on. Over the twenty-five generations that Europeans have been in the Americas, any

individual living today can claim an incomprehensible number of sets of grandparents and great grandparents, as well as literally hundreds of surnames which are his or her rightful kin. As each new surname is added by marriage, it connects us to still more important genealogical lines of descent, each with its special characters, both heroes and villains. This fact is often overlooked by those who are not professional genealogists. It is just as important for us to examine our heritage and descent through our mother's and grandmother's lines as it is through the male line and the surname we carry. In fact, the *National Geographic*'s Human Genome Project points out that we are all related if relationships are traced back far enough.[3] The male line and surname is usually the one traced because that is the most familiar name, but it is not always the most exciting. For each generation of grandparents there are three or more surnames added to the male surname, and therefore additional genealogical lines represented in each individual's heritage. It is no more difficult to trace the maternal than the paternal line, once its importance is realized.

My father's surname was Zavaleta, and his father was Zavaleta, and his father was Zavaleta, and so on in an unbroken line. But, by studying only the Zavaleta line, we overlook other very important surnames that exist in our family heritage. In just the three generations mentioned above, father, grandfather, and great grandfather, we find the following surnames: García, Gómez, Chapa (which appears twice), Cortina, Cisneros, Sánchez, and Sáenz. Because of the unique nature of our surnames, and because of the importance of our geographic region, it is possible to trace our collective heritage through twenty-five generations in the Americas and even well beyond that point in Spain, if we care to. If we examine most ancestral family lines in the region of Northeastern Mexico and South Texas since its founding around 1600, we can easily trace families for twenty of the twenty-five human generations in the Americas right here along the banks of the Rio Bravo. Many ancestral histories contain a distant but real

relationship with notable surnames that formed the region, such as Alonzo, de la Garza, Chapa, Falcón, Sánchez, and Treviño.[4]

As we search ancestral generations we recognize that our grandparents and great-grandparents were also someone else's. Any study of the growth and development of this important region of Spanish colonization reveals the relatedness of surnames of the founders as well as the patterns of marriage and settlement of extended kinship groups.[5]

Consider a brief history lesson. In 1519, Alonso Álvarez de Pineda sailed northward along the Gulf Coast from Veracruz, recording the location of the mouth of the *Rio Bravo del Norte.* Pineda and his crew were, arguably, the first Europeans to visit the region. Sailing just a few leagues up river, they encountered numerous settlements of unfriendly, native Coahuiltecans. These first explorers described the region as hostile, unhealthy, swampy, and disease-ridden. It was nearly another one hundred years before any sustained settlement was considered in the region of the lower Rio Bravo del Norte.[6]

Spanish settlers traveled along the Camino Real from Mexico City to Zacatecas, Saltillo, Cerralvo and Ciudad Mier, then north to the *Rio Bravo del Norte.* The road then continued on east to the border with the French territory or west to Santa Fe, New México. Spanish settlement was not haphazard, and military units, exploring ever northward, were accompanied by Catholic priests. *Villas, presidios* and *misiones* were established, and special grants of land were made to Spanish nobility and entrepreneurs. When it was thought that the area was safe enough for families, settlers came along.

The first families settled in the north in the larger and more safely populated towns, but as families grew they required new land holdings. Second-born sons and others who were not entitled to inherit land were sent out along the newest routes in search of land and opportunities to establish new settlements. This is how the

northeastern region of Mexico and South Texas were originally settled.[7]

By 1600, less than 100 years after the Conquista, Spanish families began pouring into the Mexican provinces of Coahuila, and Nuevo León. In many cases, very large portions of land were granted at great distances from family homes. Families who settled in Nuevo León and Coahuila also had grants of land far to the north and west in Texas and New Mexico.[8]

Escandón's settlement of Nuevo Santander, in the 1750s, came very late in Spanish colonization, so that the establishment of the communities from Laredo down-river to Reynosa and eventually to Matamoros provided the last great economic opportunity in the region. It was critically important that family members who lived at distances from the family homes be connected, socially, politically, and economically. In order to achieve and sustain ties over time and distance, Spanish families sought to arrange the marriage of their children to other Spaniards. The children of Spaniards born in the New World were not considered pure Spaniards, but were assigned instead to the second-highest class category of *criollo*. There was a constant need to attract young Spaniards available for marriage in the area. This was not always possible, so that marriages between cousins became characteristic of the region. Northeastern Mexico was also home to ethnic enclaves of Sephardic Jews and Basques.[9] Both of these groups married within their own ethnic categories as well.[10]

Examination of marriage documents from important central places such as Parras and Saltillo in Coahuila; Monterrey and Cerralvo in Nuevo León; and Ciudad Mier and Camargo in Tamaulipas reveal very definite patterns of preferred marriage between prominent families.[11] This was an important strategy in maintaining and consolidating land holdings. It was common for siblings from one prominent family to marry the siblings of another prominent family. Commonly, brothers and sisters from one family would marry the brothers and sisters of another family. This was so often

the case in the author's family that today it is laughable when almost any descendant of a pioneer family is identified as a cousin. The complexity of the interrelatedness of families in the region is extraordinary. Additionally, Spanish families were continuously recruited to the area so as to ensure Spanish marriage partners for the next generation.[12]

The descent line in Spanish-American colonial society, as in Spain, was all important. The disclosure of at least two surnames, father's surname followed by mother's surname (for example, García Gómez, Zavaleta Chapa, or Muñoz Chapa) was absolutely required in order to place a person properly in society. In elite families and those families that could claim nobility, it was not uncommon to list four or more surnames. Any sort of official action in government, church, or society required one to *"díles quién eres"* ("tell them who you are"), that is to lay out an ancestral line so as to establish how social position was to be assigned.

The system seemed to work well until Mexico gained her independence from Spain in 1821. The increasing presence of Anglo settlement in east-central Texas in the 1830s eventually led to the Mexican military intervention at San Antonio de Valero and the battle of the Alamo. By the time of the Battle of the Alamo, Spanish/Mexican families who settled on the Rio Bravo more than one hundred years earlier were stretched out along the *Camino Real,* north to San Antonio, east to Nacogdoches and west to Santa Fe. The Mexican's fleeting victory at the Alamo was followed by Santa Anna's defeat at San Jacinto, and that failure eventually led to the formation of the Republic of Texas. Mexico, a centralized nation with a government and social culture centered in the Valley of Mexico, paid little attention to settlement north of the Rio Bravo. As a result of this failure, Mexico eventually lost half of its land to the United States in 1848.[13]

The decade between 1835 and 1845 was of critical importance to the Spanish/Mexican families living along the *Rio Bravo* and the *Camino Real.* Imagine that your family had a two-hundred-year

history in one ranching location and were left alone, being only tangentially connected to centralized government. Imagine that, in a period of only 50 years (that is less than two generations), your governmental affiliation changed repeatedly from Spanish colonial government to Mexican republic, to contested no-man's land, to the locally-formed break-away Republic of the Rio Grande, to another republic controlled by foreigners – the Republic of Texas, and finally to statehood and the formation of Texas. Then imagine that this final socio-political state was dominated by a foreign nation not like yours with a foreign culture and a language and laws you did not understand. This is exactly what the Spanish/Mexican families of the *Rio Bravo* and the *Camino Real* experienced. The families of the *Rio Bravo* have lived in an increasingly irredentist society for more than two hundred years.

The Mexican American War of 1846 to 1848 culminated in the annexation of the (formerly Spanish) Mexican lands of all Mexican families in Texas. That tumultuous era was followed by political uncertainty and military conflict that lasted through the end of the nineteenth century. Through it all, hundreds of families faced great hostilities, but were able to maintain title to their ancestral lands. Many others were not so fortunate, losing both their lands and their lives. By the Fourth Legislature of the State of Texas in 1852, laws were established that recognized Spanish and Mexican land grants as valid in Texas. Volume four of the proceedings of the fourth legislature, Chapter LXXI, pages 63 to 71, list the names of the Spanish/Mexican families and their titles to land in Webb, Starr, Cameron, Nueces and Kinney Counties. In 1976, Virginia H. Taylor published an *Index to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants for the Texas General Land Office,* which further codifies family title to land. For example, on page 14, an entry for our family up-river lands reads as follows:

> Chapa, Joaquin, Porción 58, Mier, Starr County. 5,733.87 acres; Abstract S-289, Granted by Spain, 1767. Copy of title in "Visita General," Spanish Archives. Bourland and Miller Report;

Rafael Martinez by Gregorio Saens applies for Porción 58, Originally granted to Joaquin Chapa. Recommended. Confirmed by Legislature, Act of March 31, 1921 (37th Legislature, Ch. 123, p. 232, General Laws). Patent: February 11, 1948; No. 371, V. 8-B. General Land Office File San Patricio 1-787.[14]

The families who were granted *porciones* of land fronting on the river in Texas' Webb and Starr Counties were the pioneer families of Nuevo León and later of Tamaulipas and the Escandón settlements in Nuevo Laredo, Revilla (Guerrero), Mier, Camargo and Reynosa. The children born on the *porciones* married one another uniting families, with familiar surnames such as the following:

Chapa(porción59), Farias (porción 60), Guerra (porción 66), Leal (porción 55), Ysaguirre and Pantaleon (porción 56); Ramirez (porción 67 and 76), Salinas (porción 70 and 71), Vela (porción 57), Ynojosa (porción 68), Sáenz/Saens (porciones74,72,73), Sánchez (porciones53,69), de la Garza, Farías, Zavaleta, Ramírez, Pena, de la Pena, Guerra, Villarreal, Treviño, Cavazos, Cortinas, Cisneros, Gómez, García, Hinojosa, Falcón and others Descendents of Don Juan Bautista Chapa and Dona Beatriz Olivarez de Trevino; Descendants of Don Blas Maria de la Garza y Falcón and Dona Beatriz Gonzalez Hidalgo; Descendants of Gabriel Cavazos; Descendants of Capitan Pedro de la Garza Falcón y Treviño; Descendants of Don Jose Manuel de Goseascochea and Doña Maria Francisca Xaviera de la y Garza de la Garza).[15]

There are too many names to list. This partial list is intended to show many of the common and familiar family names in Northeastern Mexican and South Texas history.

By the early twentieth century in the area of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico, almost all of the original Escandón families had intermarried, with family members living in such origin cities as Parras and Saltillo in Coahuila and Monterrey and Cerralvo in Nuevo León. They also had family members living in such newer communities as Dr. Gonzalez and General Teran in Nuevo León, as well as in the down-river communities of Camargo, Reynosa, and Matamoros.

Matamoros, located near to the coast and so important economically, grew rapidly, and quickly boasted representatives of most of the pioneer families who continued to marry amongst themselves. Many of these families had members living on both the north and the south sides of the river. By 1900, families had been split by nationality for approximately fifty years. The *Rio Bravo* ran through their ancestral lands, so that family members on the south bank were Mexicans, while those living on the north bank were Americans. Geographic location determined national identity.

A well-documented early-twentieth-century land dispute in the area of Matamoros is instructive in that it lists many of the intermarried relatives who had rights to land in the area of Matamoros. All are cousins, including the surnames Chapa, Cisneros, Treviño, Hinojosa, Alaniz, Peña, Martínez, García, Gómez, González, Vidal, Bochas, Longoria, Ramírez, Santos Coy, (de los Santos Coy), Solís, Barbosa, Pérez, Fernández, Vela, Zavaleta, Muñoz, Guzmán, Lucio, Fragoso, Valdez, Elizondo, Orive, Cabrera, de los Santos, Larrasquítu, Pacheco, Romo, Romero, Guerra and many others.

After the Mexican American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Brownsville, Texas, was founded on the north bank of the *Rio Bravo del Norte,* directly across from Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Matamoros was a cosmopolitan city with at least seventy-five years of history at the time Brownsville was founded. Spanish/Mexican families owned the prairies and grasslands on the north bank, which served as pasture lands for their herds. Their

surnames are still recognizable in Matamoros and Brownsville today. Enormous tracts of land were granted to Spanish/Mexican families who pioneered northern Mexico and the other communities up-river from Matamoros. Many other landless families filled in the area, working on the ranches and farms and building the towns. The social structure that was created in early Matamoros and Brownsville survives to this day.

By 1750, or one hundred years before the founding of Brownsville and seventy years before Mexico gained her independence from Spain, small ranches *(rancherías)* were established along the banks of the river, where cattle owners from neighboring Reynosa and Camargo pastured their animals. In 1774, three wealthy families from Nuevo León purchased locations for the pasturing of cattle led by Capitán Don Ignacio Anastacio de Ayala. Eventually the area came to be known as San Juan de los Esteros Hermosos.[16]

In the 19th century, long before their family members relocated to Matamoros, the Zavaleta, Chapa, García, and Gómez families were mercantilists and ranchers from Coahuila, Nuevo León. Pedro Zavaleta Chapa, the eldest son of Bartolo Zavaleta Sánchez and Eufemia Chapa Sáenz/Saens, was born in Ciudad Mier, and raised on the family ranches at Chapeño *porciones* 58 and 59, near Roma, Texas in Starr County. Early connections were established between the families of Cd. Mier, Saltillo, and Matamoros. As a young boy, Pedro Zavaleta Chapa was sent to boarding school down-river at Saint Joseph Academy in Brownsville. He had relatives in Matamoros who looked after him, and he would travel by riverboat from Roma to Matamoros/Brownsville. Upon his graduation he was sent to stay with family (Chapa-Sánchez-Sáenz/Saens) in Saltillo, where he studied to be a civil engineer at university and courted and married Rafaela Mireles Farias, the daughter of a wealthy Coahuila family. By 1900, the extended Chapa family stretched out across Northern Mexico and South Texas. Cities, towns, and ranches were linked by familial relationship where one had only to "tell them who you were" to find room, board and support.

Economic ties were also established. Pedro and Rafaela first lived in Laredo and then at the family ranch at Roma, Texas. Rafaela bore four sons, dying during the birth of her fourth son, Enrique. Pedro, now a widower, moved his four sons from the ranch in Roma to the big city of Matamoros and finally to Brownsville. Pedro's father, Bartolo was Constable in Starr County, Texas, and one of the first Spanish-surnamed elected officials in the County. He was also a powerful politician. Down-river at Brownsville, the most influential Republican in Texas, R.B. Creager, influenced both state and national politics in the early twentieth century. Creager was Bartolo's attorney so he penned a note (still in the possession of the family) of introduction for his son to Mr. Creager, which led to one of the most lucrative land clearing contracts, *desenraizar* (root plow), in Cameron County history. Pedro, with hundreds of workers, hand cleared all of the *monte,* south Texas thorn brush lands, owned by Harlingen business man Lon C. Hill. From Los Fresnos north to Rio Hondo along the coast, these virgin lands were leveled and prepared for agricultural activity. Because Pedro had cousins living in Matamoros, he was introduced to Matamoros society and married Concepción García Gómez Cisneros Cortina Chapa. Concepción was the granddaughter of Tamaulipas General and Military Governor Juan N. Cortina and a descendant of Irineo Gómez and Rafael García, all wealthy land owners. Irineo Gómez was the owner of Las Barrosas Ranch, and Rafael García and Ygnacio Treviño owned most of the land around Point Isabel, Texas, while Ygnacio Treviño was the original grantee of the San Martín Ranch (where Palmito Hill is located). All three are original family land grants and the following legal descriptions are taken from the Spanish archives of the State of Texas General Land Office.[17]

> **Gómez, Irineo. "Las Barrosas."** Kenedy County. 24,660 acres; K-43. Granted by Mexico, January 15, 1848. Original title, V. 58, No. 208, Spanish Archives. Bourland and Miller Report: Irineo Gómez and Macedonio Capistran apply for five

leagues of land originally granted to said Irineo Gómez by Mexican authorities in 1832. Witnesses prove occupation of the land claimed by the two applicants. Recommended. Confirmed by Legislature, Act of February 10, 1852. Patent May 26, 1873; No. 390, V. 19. General Land Office File San Patricio 1-548.[18]

Garcia, Rafael (Deceased). "Santa Isabel." Cameron County. 32,355 acres; Abstract C-1. Granted by Mexico, 1828. Copy of title: Original testimonio withdrawn from Spanish Archives April 1, 1847, by Heirs of Rafael Garcia. Bourland and Miller Report: Doña Maria de los Angeles García de Tarnava and Doña Felipa García de Mananton (Mannatou) apply for seven leagues of land called Santa Isabel, originally granted by the State of Tamaulipas to Rafael García, now deceased. Witnesses prove the validity of this grant and the occupation, cultivation, and pasturage of the same having thereon, two separate ranches or farms from the year 1826 down to the present time, and say that they have never heard of any adverse claimant to said tract of land or the title thereto disputed. Recommended. Confirmed by the Legislature, Act of February 10, 1852. Patent: December 18, 1872; No. 158, V. 19. General Land Office File San Patricio, 1-418.[19]

Treviño, José Ygnacio De, "San Martin," Palmito Hill Ranch, Cameron County, 27,289.5 acres; Abstract C-6. Granted by Mexico, 1827. Original testimonio withdrawn from Spanish Archives, April 1, 1854, by Morgan Barclay. Bourland and Miller Report: Manuel Treviño applies for the estate of his father Ygnacio Treviño, five and one half leagues of pasture land originally granted by

the State of Tamaulipas in 1827. Recommended. Confirmed by Legislature, Act of February 10, 1852. Patent: June 27, 1872; No. 20, V. 19. General Land Office File San Patricio 1-411. Acreage corrected Supplement D.[20]

Over time, children raised on the porciones up-river in the jurisdictions of Laredo, Revilla, Cd. Mier, and Camargo married and moved northward along alternate routes of the *Camino Real.*[21] The primary *Camino* ran from Saltillo, crossing the river at Piedras Negras across from Eagle Pass, Texas, in Maverick County. Another branch of the Camino tracked from Cd. Mier north into Texas, to the west of the coastal lowlands and into today's Duval County and San Diego, Texas. Numerous original *Rio Bravo* families settled in Jim Wells, Brooks and Duval Counties such as the Barrera and many Chapas in San Diego, Texas, which became a noted "Mexican" town. The brother of Bartolo, Abraham Zavaleta, and his wife, Estefania Chapa Sáenz, were among those who moved from the banks of the *Rio Bravo,* first to Duval County and then into Karnes and DeWitt Counties. The Chapa and Sáenz/ Saens families from the village of Chapeño (located below the present location of Falcón Dam on the *Rio Bravo*) have numerous descendants living in Duval County today.[22] The *Camino* continued north and east toward Mission Espíritu Santo in Goliad County and Presidio la Bahia. In Karnes County, Old Cart Road (the Anglo name for that section of the *Camino*) connected Chihuahua and El Paso to San Antonio. The *Camino Real* ran through today's Brooks, Caldwell, Nueces, Live Oak, DeWitt, Gonzales, Karnes, Goliad, Refugio, and Victoria Counties, and more. Today, Spanish/ Mexican birth, death, and marriage certificates for our *Rio Bravo* ancestors may be culled from the county courthouses in each of these counties. I found Spanish surnames listed in official records almost always spelled incorrectly so search wisely.[23]

By the mid-twentieth century, families interacted with their members on both sides of the Rio Bravo with impunity. In Brownsville, Texas, the French order of Oblates of Mary

Immaculate missionaries operated a Catholic boy's school that had been in operation for ninety-three years, since 1865 – fifteen short years after the community's founding in 1850.[24] When Pedro Zavaleta Chapa's grandson Anthony Zavaleta Reid was promoted to the seventh grade in 1958 and "skipped" to the "New St. Joe," Grandfather Pedro brought Anthony a horse from his ranch up-river and crossed him from Mexico to Texas, down-river, east of Matamoros at El Gomeño where Grandmother Concepción's ranch was located. The sorrel was kept on Tía Eva García Gómez Orive's ranch at Palmito Hill. Both ranches are part of the original Ygnacio Treviño ranch founded by a land grant in 1827. Presenting his grandson with the horse, Grandfather Pedro said, *"Tengo mucho orgullo de tí, hijo. Siempre diles quién eres."* Decades would pass before Anthony understood the full meaning of what his Grandfather had told him so many years before. In his seventies at the time, Pedro told his grandson that a person should always tell people his or her pedigree. One will be known by who the ancestors were.

Our personal and family histories are critically important to an understanding of our Texas *persona* and of Texans of Mexican descent in particular. The *Rio Bravo* and the *Camino Real* are important historic locations for us *Tejanos,* playing a role in defining who we are and how we view ourselves. For more than one-hundred-seventy years, Texans have struggled to live their identity as defined by Texan jingoism. Uncovering the truth behind the heroic lives along the river and the road *(El Rio y el Camino)* is critical to understanding who we are. By making the truth available to the wider public, we address the even more important need to unite our Spanish/Mexican and Anglo populations. Over the course of the last fifty years, our knowledge and understanding of the "facts" surrounding life on the Rio Bravo and the Camino Real has been inadequately studied and even discouraged.

We must honor our ancestors by taking a fresh look at what life was like in South Texas from 1600 to 1900. We must re-visit all of the important personalities, high and low, in an exceptionally well documented and informative discussion. Our ancestors expect us

to review existing information to uncover new information and offer interpretation of their lives through the eyes of the Spanish/Mexican community. Why is this important? A new generation of Texans and *Tejanos* is being educated in the State's public school system with textbooks which continue to omit and obfuscate the facts. Today's young Texans will face societal and economic challenges like no other generation before them. In order to prevail in the global economy, the next generation of Texans must forge a personal and societal identity that unites them through a shared and respected history. Texas' prosperity lies in our ability to merge the diverse ethnic tapestry of today into the Texas of tomorrow.

It's fair to say that I love Texas and being a Texan. A passion for Texas runs deep in me and in all of my family. However, the bumper sticker that adorns my truck today says, "No Border Wall," and that slogan defines the continued misunderstanding of our history and our neighbors. We are Americans and we are Texans but we are also fiercely proud of our Spanish/Mexican heritage.

Reared in south Texas in the second half of the 20th century, we learned the State's historical reality as it was forged by our Texas founders. The original history of Texas was written by historical giants whose legacy and importance lives on in such sources as the work of Hubert Howe Bancroft[25] and the work of Frank Cushman Pierce.[26] Their accounts of Texas history (and especially of that great swath of land that lies between San Antonio and the Rio Bravo del Norte) shaped South Texas and influenced the outcome of national politics. In the nine years between 1836 and 1846, Texas became first a republic and then a state, and the American army of occupation invaded the sovereign nation of Mexico. In 1848, the boundary between the United States and Mexico was established at the *Rio Bravo del Norte* and Mexico lost half of her land mass.

A State of Texas provided my generation with both a national and a cultural identity, a road map that leads us through life in Texas today. We have been taught that Anglo-Texans were heroes and

nation builders. However, our Mexican ancestors were no less capable as nation builders when in 1840 they formed the Republic of the Rio Grande, carved out of the three northeastern Mexican states. The identities used to identify Texans and Mexicans mix concepts on both sides of the *Rio Bravo del Norte.* So who are we: Texans, Mexicans, Americans, Mexican-Americans, or simply *Tejanos?*[27]

There is an entire generation of young Texans who are searching for meaning in their lives, including their cultural and historic roots. They must know where they fit in order to develop their identity. The sensible choice is to recognize and honor both Mexican and Texan history as "The History of Texas." For example, in elementary school we learned that the Alamo was something important; also our fathers took us to see it. We were descended from the side that carried the field of battle in 1836, but we have lost in almost every way since then. Our ancestors served in the Matamoros Battalion at the Alamo, but we were told that we should not talk about it because people would not understand. Santa Anna was a family friend, but we were told that we should not be proud of that either.

Brownsville was widely divided along racial and ethnic lines in the 1950s, a period which had to be carefully navigated. We did not know that we were "Mexican." In those halcyon days we grew up in the Disney generation, and Davy Crockett was our hero alongside Zorro. We were just like thousands of other Texas kids as we anticipated each Sunday's episode with coonskin cap, BB gun, cape and sword in hand. We grew to become Texans molded by the stereotypes and misrepresentations of a one-sided historical melodrama in which there were two clear sides, the winners and the losers. Mexicans were on the losing side.

Our grandparents heralded from prominent Spanish land-grant families tracing their heritage across the Spanish province of *Coahuila y Tejas* long before there was a State of Texas. Today, these families stretch out along the *Camino Real* from Saltillo the capitol

of Coahuila to Cd. Mier on the *Rio Bravo del Norte* and northward through the brush country to San Antonio and southward to Matamoros on the Gulf coast. This is important because it helps to explain what my grandfather meant so many years ago when he told me, *dile quién eres.* His advice was an essential requirement in his day, but is it in my day? I believe it is. It begs the question: do we come from people who ride horses *(caballeros o caballerangos)*, or are we people who walk *(peones)*? One's status and the opportunities that life brings are influenced by our personal histories.

Throughout my life, and for reasons I do not totally understand, I have revered history with all its intrigue and failings. I comprehend how things that happened in the past affect people's lives in the present. History must be constantly called into question and corrected. Texas is a State where the books used in Texas classrooms continue to limit the contributions of our Hispanic and African-American heroes. When young Texans first learn about Texas history (and especially about critically important events like the Battle of the Alamo) they believe the account they read to be true. The cowardly Mexican army slaughtered the heroic Texans. But what had the Mexican army and their leaders done wrong in protecting their nation? Responses have always come back the same: that the Mexicans were responsible for the deaths of our Texas heroes. Must the Texas Hispanic population of the twenty-first century be held responsible for the deaths of Texas heroes in the nineteenth century?

Simply stated, I don't want Texas's youth to experience the conflict of past generations. While I do not believe that racism is still actively taught and practiced in Texas classrooms, many of Texas' historical myths live on and, by definition, continue to divide us into good and bad, Anglos and Mexicans. Texas' history influences Texas' present and future. Texans of Mexican descent continue to be stereotyped as treacherous cheaters and back-stabbers, while the heroes of the Alamo continue to be revered as exemplars. Texas' historical icons live on, and continue to impact our concepts of self and social position.

Early Texas historians spun their historical narrative of the events of the nineteenth century for purposes that have no place in the future. The evil despot Santa Anna crossed into Texas at several points along the river, including Matamoros, and marched across south Texas arriving in San Antonio where there ensued a bloody siege of the old Spanish mission and its defenders.[28] It was there that the valiant and righteous Texians staged their last stand in defense of the rights of Texas and its citizens. Bowie, Travis, and the gentleman from Tennessee, Congressman Crockett, defended the Alamo to the death, for the Glory of Texas. "Remember the Alamo!" But what exactly are we supposed to remember? What really happened at the Alamo? With new information validated we can no longer "remember" or believe what we were told by earlier generations. I exonerate early Texas historians of any mistakes that might have been made in their original description of the siege and the deaths of the defenders. These early chroniclers were simply serving the important purpose of building stories and symbols for modern Texas and the Texas identity. However, a "New History" has been emerging for more than sixty years, which, remarkably, includes the contributions of Latinos, African-Americans, Native Americans, and others.

In the early part of the twentieth century, a whole generation of native-Texas scholars questioned Texas history as it was written. They mentored us through our university programs and, by the 1960's, a revisionist history of Texas had emerged. Most of our teachers, including Americo Paredes and Carlos E. Castañeda, have left us now, but what they taught us lives on in our generation and is now being passed on to the next. Many academics have questioned the "official" history, a move which has not always made us welcome or popular. Yet it has finally made us confident of our identities and has helped us to define ourselves and to teach the next generation of Texans. Texas history is mostly correct; it is the omission of facts and the interpretation of events as applied to society that is flawed. Unfortunately, we live in a world where the facts are sometimes twisted to justify inequality.

The *Rio Bravo del Norte* and the *Camino Real* serve as the premier symbols of Tejano history, providing us with new information and a fresh way of interpreting Tejano and Texas history in the "New Texas History." Additional information will almost certainly emerge and we must examine the merits of history as it is discovered and its veracity determined. We are obligated to correct the historical record in Texas for the benefit of future generations. Such historical revisionism is not anti-establishment. It is courageous and insightful, teaching the value of inclusion, not exclusion.

Many Families One History:

What follows represents the product of more than forty years of personal research on my family ancestry. I have listed below my father's mother's family heritage, followed by my father's father's line. These two lines are no less than the history of the *Rio Bravo* and the *Camino Real.*[29]

What is notable about my father's mother's family is that it traces back to Marcos Alonzo and the original families of Nuevo León. The de la Garza-Falcón family from whom we are directly descended was one of the twelve founding families of Monterrey, and this is where the Sephardic Jewish line enters the family. Marcos Alonzo Garza is the forefather of many that carry the surnames or who are related to the Garza, de la Garza, Falcón and Treviño families. What is known about Capitán Marcos Alonzo Garza is that he was the son of Marcos Alonzo and Constanza La Garza and that he went by the name Marcos Alonzo Garza y del Arcón; Marcos Alonzo Arza y del Arcón; Marcos Alonzo Garza del Alcón and simply Marcos Alonzo. He was born in Lepe, Huelva, Spain around 1550 and came to New Spain, serving in the military. In 1585, he married Juana de Treviño from a prominent Mexico City military family. The Treviño family was well known to have converted from Judaism to Christianity. His assignments took the family to Durango and Zacatecas, where he supervised the mining of silver and gold. His entire family settled in Nuevo

León sometime between 1596 and 1603, after the completion of his military career. The family of Marcos Alonzo is included in the list of the twelve original founding families of Monterrey, Nuevo León, in 1596. It is not known where the "del Arcon" or "del Alcon" part of his last name is from. However, this ending had an impact on his son, Blas, for he used it as his last name, de la Garza-Falcón. Alcón is the ancient form of the word *Halcón* or Falcón. The children of Marcos Alonzo did not continue the use of their father's surname and this might have been due to its identification with Judaism. Hernando Alonzo financed and aided Hernán Cortés. After the conquest of Mexico City, Hernando Alonzo (a Jew who was well-known in the New World) became wealthy and powerful and was ordered burned alive at the stake by the Inquisition. Marcos Alonzo's sons Francisco and Pedro used the last name de la Garza. Blas used the last name de la Garza-Falcón, and sons Diego, Alonzo and José used their maternal last name Treviño.[30]

My father's mother, Concepción García Gómez Cisneros Cortina Chapa, is where we pick up this incredible genealogical line. I hope you find your ancestor in here as well.

Descent Line through author's father's (#29) mother (#27)

1. Marcos Alonzo = 2. Constanza la Garza

Son ↓

3. Marcos Alonzo de la Garza = 4. Juana Quintanilla Treviño

Son ↓

5. Blas Maria de la Garza-Falcón-Treviño = 6. Beatriz Gonzalez Hidalgo-Navarro

Son ↓

7. Blas de la Garza Falcón Gonzalez = 8. Teresa Guerrero

Son ↓

9. Miguel de la Garza Falcón Guerrero = 10. Gertrudis Sepúlveda de Renteria

Daughter ↓

11. Maria de la Garza Renteria Sepúlveda = 12. Pedro de Elizondo

Daughter ↓

13. Maria Elizondo de la Garza = 14. José Adriano de la Garza-Gutiérrez

Son ↓

15. José Salvador de la Garza Elizondo = 16. Maria Gertrudis de la Garza Falcón Gómez

Daughter ↓

17. Maria Francisca Xaviera = 18. José Manuel Goseascochea de la Garza Falcón

Son ↓

19. Trinidad Cortina = 20. Estefana Goseascochea de la Garza

Son ↓

21. Juan Nepomuceno Cortina = 22. Rafaela Cortez

Daughter ↓

23. Estefana Cortina Cortez = 24. Jesus Garcia

Son ↓

25. Jesus Garcia Cortina = 26. Francisca Gómez Cisneros Chapa

Daughter ↓

27. Concepción Garcia Gómez Cortina Cisneros = 28. Pedro Zavaleta Chapa

Son ↓

29. Fernando Zavaleta Garcia Gómez (FEZ) = 30. Eleanor Reid Linville

Son ↓

31. Antonio N. Zavaleta Reid (EGO) = 32. Norma Martínez Villarreal Champion

Son ↓

33. Anthony N. Zavaleta Martínez = 34. Wendy Brown

Son ↓

35. Alexander N. Zavaleta Brown (son of ANZ, Jr.)

36. G. Christopher Zavaleta (2nd son of ANZ and NMV) = 37. Jennifer Woodcock

38. Rowan Willow (daughter of GCZ and JW)

39. Brian Mathew Zavaleta (3rd son of ANZ and NMV) = 40. Kara Whitfield

41. Michael Anthony Zavaleta (4th son of ANZ & GSV) = 37. Gabriela Sosa Vargas

Legend

What follows here is what we have been able to find on each of the persons listed above:

1. Marcos Alonzo was born between around 1524 in Lepe Huelva Spain.

2. Constanza la Garza was born around 1528 in Lepe Huelva Spain.

3. Marcos Alonzo de la Garza was born around 1550 in Lepe Huelva Spain and died in 1634 in Nuevo León. Marcos Alonzo de la Garza is believed to be the progenitor of many that carry the surnames Garza, de la Garza, Falcón, and Treviño. It is believed that he

came from a Jewish family and therefore his original surname of Alonzo was dropped by his children and descendants.

4. Juana Quintanilla Treviño was born in 1566 in Mexico D.F. and married in Durango around 1575.

5. Blas Maria de la Garza Falcón-Treviño was born on February 21, 1580 in Real de Mapimi, Durango and died February 21, 1669 in Monterrey, Nuevo León. He married Beatriz Gonzalez Hidalgo-Navarro sometime before 1626 in Saltillo, Coahuila.

6. Beatriz Gonzalez Hidalgo-Navarro was born about 1591 in Saltillo, Coahuila, and died on May 10, 1670 in Monterrey, Nuevo León. Her parents were Marcos Gonzalez Hidalgo de Valle and Mariana Navarro Rodriguez. She is a direct descendant of Juan Navarro the Conquistador a Basque warrior who arrived with Hernan Cortez in Mexico in 1519. His son was one of the founders of Nueva Vizcaya or Durango, Mexico.

7. Sergeant Major Blas de la Garza-Falcón was the son of Blas and Beatriz. He was born in 1621 in Saltillo, Coahuila and died on October 3, 1689 in Monterrey, Nuevo León. He served as the Governor of Nuevo León from 1667 to 1676.

8. Teresa Guerrero was born in Monterrey, Nuevo León and died on August 16, 1677 in Monterrey, Nuevo León. She was the wife of Blas de la Garza-Falcón.

9. Captain Miguel de la Garza-Falcón was born in Monterrey Nuevo León in 1640 and died on October 27, 1697 in Monterrey, Nuevo León. Miguel de la Garza-Falcón was married to Gertrudis Sepúlveda-de Renteria.

10. Gertrudis Sepulveda-de Renteria was born in 1642 in Nuevo León and died on January 22, 1687/9 in Nuevo León. Her parents were Jacinto Garcia de Sepúlveda and Clara Fernández de Castro.

11. Maria de la Garza Renteria-Sepúlveda was the daughter of Miguel de la Garza Falcón and Gertrudis Sepúlveda de Renteria and was born in 1674 in Nuevo León and died on July 8, 1715 in Salinas Victoria, Nuevo León.

12. General Pedro de Elizondo was born in 1681 in Saltillo, Coahuila married Maria de la Garza Renteria Sepúlveda he died in Monterrey on July 30, 1749.

13. Maria Elizondo de la Garza was the daughter of Maria de la Garza and Pedro Elizondo. She was born in 1698 in Monterrey, Nuevo León and death not known. She was married in Monterrey, Nuevo León on November 17, 1717 to Capitan José Adriano de la Garza-Gutierrez.

14. Capitan José Adriano de la Garza-Gutierrez was born on May 10, 1687 in Monterrey Nuevo León and died on August 18, 1757 in Monterrey, Nuevo León. His parents were Salvador de la Garza-Montemayor and Juana Gutiérrez de Castro.

15. José Salvador de la Garza Elizondo was born on May 25, 1738 in Monterrey, Nuevo León and died in September 1781 at his ranch, Rancho Viejo in present day Cameron County, Texas. He was the original grantee of the Espiritu Santo Land Grant and was married to Gertrudis de la Garza Falcón Gómez.

16. Maria Gertrudis de la Garza is a descendant of General Ireneo Gómez the land grantee of Las Barrosas which was located in the modern day King Ranch and the owner of very large portions of land in modern day Matamoros and San Carlos, Tamaulipas. Ireneo was the ancestor of the Gómez family which lived in Matamoros and married Pedro Zavaleta grandfather of Anthony "Tony" Zavaleta.

17. Maria Francisca Xaviera de la Garza de la Garza Falcón was born in Camargo, Tamaulipas in 1770 and died on August 20 1833. She inherited the western one-third of the Espiritu Santo Land Grant (Rancho Viejo) and was married to José Manuel Goseascochea in Camargo, Tamaulipas on February 27, 1787.

18. José Manuel Goseascochea was born in Lequito Spain in the Basque Province in 1768 and was Alcalde of Matamoros at the time of his marriage.

19. Trinidad Cortina was an attorney and Alcalde of Camargo, Tamaulipas when he married Estefana Goseascochea de la Garza viuda de Cavazos.

20. Estefana Goseascochea de la Garza was born in 1797 in Camargo, Tamulipas and died in 1850 on her ranch El Carmen in Cameron County Texas. She was first married to José Maria Francisco Vicente Cavazos in 1815 in Camargo, Tamaulipas and widoded. She then in 1823 married Trinidad Cortina the alcalde of Camargo and theer son was Juan N. Cortina.

21. Juan Nepomuceno Cortina Goseascochea de la Garza was born on May 16, 1824 in Camargo, Tamaulipas and died on October 30, 1894 in Mexico, D.F. He married Rafaela Cortez in Brownsville, Texas in January of 1850.

22. Rafaela Cortez married Juan N. Cortina in 1850 in Brownsville, Texas. Their daughter was Estefana Cortina Cortez.

23. Estefana Cortina Cortez, the daughter of Juan N. Cortina was born about 1851 in Brownsville, Texas and married Jesus Garcia.

24. Jesus Garcia married Estefana Cortina Cortez the daughter of Juan N. Cortina

25. Jesus Garcia Cortina was the father of Conception Garcia Gómez Zavaleta

26. Francisca Gómez Cisneros was the mother of Conception Garcia Gómez and is the direct descendant of General Ireneo Gómez.

27. Concepcion Garcia Gómez Cortina was the grandmother of Tony Zavaleta, Sr.

28. Pedro Zavaleta Chapa was the grandfather of Anthony Noé "Tony" Zavaleta Sr.

29. Fernando Zavaleta Garcia Gómez, father of Anthony "Tony" Noé Zavaleta, Sr.

30. Eleanor Reid Linville, mother of Anthony Nóe Zavaleta, Sr.

31. Anthony Nóe Zavaleta Reid, EGO

32. Norma Martinez Villarreal Champion, first wife of Anthony Noé Zavaleta, Sr.

33. Anthony N. Zavaleta Martinez, first born son of Anthony and Norma

34. Wendy Brown, wife of Anthony Noé Zavaleta, Jr.

35. Alexander N. Zavaleta Brown, son of Anthony Zavaleta, Jr. and Wendy Brown

36. Gus Christopher Zavaleta, second born son of Anthony Zavaleta, Sr.

37. Jennifer Woodcock mother wife of Christopher and mother of Rowan

38. Rowan Willow, daughter of Christopher and Jennifer

39. Brian Mathew Zavaleta, third son of Anthony Zavaleta, Sr.

40. Kara Whitfield wife of Brian Mathew Zavaleta

41. Michael Anthony Zavaleta Sosa, fourth born son of Anthony Nóe Zavaleta, Sr. 12/4/07

42. Gabriela Sosa Vargas, third wife of Anthony Noé Zavaleta, Sr. and mother of Michael Anthony/Miguel Antonio Zavaleta

What follows here is an equally remarkable ancestral line followed from my father's father's line through Mexico and back to the former Basque principality of Navarre in Spain with descent lines to Romans, Goths and Arabs.

Descent line through Author's father's (#29) father (#28)

1. Michael Anthony fourth son of Anthony Noé Zavaleta, Sr.

Son

1. Anthony Noé Zavaleta, Jr. Alexander son of Anthony Noé Zavaleta, Jr.

Son

1. Gus Christopher Zavaleta Rowan daughter of Gus Christopher Zavaleta
1. Brian Mathew

Son

2. Anthony Nóe Zavaleta, Sr.

Son

3. Fernando Emilio Zavaleta

Son

4. Pedro Zavaleta Chapa

Son

5. Bartolo Zavaleta Sánchez Sáenz
(This is where the Abraham and Estefana Zavaleta ancestry line begins)

Son

6. Augustina Sánchez Sáenz

Daughter

7. Guadalupe Rodriguez

Daughter

8. José Antonio Rodriguez de Montemayor

Son

9. Nicolas José Rodriguez de Montemayor

Son

10. Miguel Rodriguez de Montemayor

Son

11. Diego Rodriguez de Montemayor

Son

12. Diego Rodriguez de Montemayor

Son

13. Diego Rodriguez de Montemayor

Son

14. Estefania Montemayor

Daughter

15. Juana Porcallo de la Cerda Casada en Mazapil, Zacatecas, Mexico 1572

Daughter

16. Vasco Porcallo Figueroa Nació en España y fue un Notable Conquistador

Son

17. Maria Aldonza Manuel de Figueroa Nació en España alrededor del año 1500

Daughter

18. Gómez Suarez de Figueroa

Son

19. Gómez Suarez de Figueroa, III

Son

20. Lorenzo Suarez de Figueroa

Son

21. Gómez Suarez de Figueroa

Son

22. Suer Fernández de Figueroa

Son

23. Rui Fernández Barba

Son

24. Teresa Ortiz Calderón

Daughter

25. Fortun Ortiz Calderón

Son

26. Fortun Sánchez (Sanz) de Salzedo

Son

27. Sancho Garcia de Salzedo

Daughter

28. Garcia Galindez Salzedo

Son

29. Galindo Valasquez

Daughter

30. Lope Sánchez de Ayala

Son

31. Sánchez de Ayala

Son

32. Sancho Senhor de Velasques

Son

33. Vela de Aragón

Son

34. Ramiro King I

Son

35. Sancho el Tercero de Navarre

Son

36. Garcia King the Fourth of Pamplona 1134-1150 King

Son

37. Sancho Garcés Abarca

Son

38. Garcia III Sánchez 1000-1035 King the Third

Son

39. Sancho II Garcés Abarca 970-994 King the Second

Son

40. King Sancho Garces The First King of Navarre, 905-926AD reign, Married Toda Aznarez de Larron. She is the connection to the Arabic, ancient Goth and Roman lines.[31]

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Endnotes

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13 http://www.loc.gov/rr/Hispanic/ghtreaty/.

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17 See also two newer General Land Office publications, Catalogue of the Spanish Collection of the Texas General Land Office Part I Titles, Unfinished Titles, Character Certificates, Applications for Admission, Register and Field Notes, and Part II Correspondence, Empresario Contracts, Decrees, Appointments, Reports, Notices and Proceedings, Archives and Records Division, Texas General Land Office, 2003, Austin, Texas.

18 http://www.glo.State.tx.us/.

19 http://www.glo.State.tx.us/.

20 http://www.glo.State.tx.us/.

21 A good list of the original *misiones, villas, presidios* in Texas are found in the work of Moore and may be accessed at http://www.Texascaminoreal.com/mission.html.

22 http://www.library.ci.Corpus-christi.tx.us/.

23 The Handbook of Texas Online, http://www/tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/.

24 Bernard Doyon, OMI, *The Cavalry of Christ on the Rio Grande* (Milwaukee: Bruce Press, 1956).

25 http://www.1st-hand-History.org/Hhb/HHBindex.htm.

26 http://www.Tshaonline.org/handbook.online.html.

27 http://www.Tejanos.com.

28 Richard R. Flores, *Remembering The Alamo* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

29 Long an obsession of mine, it was not until the advent of the internet and remarkable resources like Ancestry.com and Familysearch.org facilitated through the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) that I have been able along with my son Tony, Michael Van Wagenen, and many others to locate such a remarkable family history.

30 Research by Michael Van Wagenen, Church of Latter-Day Saints, Archives Salt Lake City, Utah.

31 The research for this article was done by Antonio Zavaleta; Anthony Zavaleta, Jr. and Michael Van Wagenen.

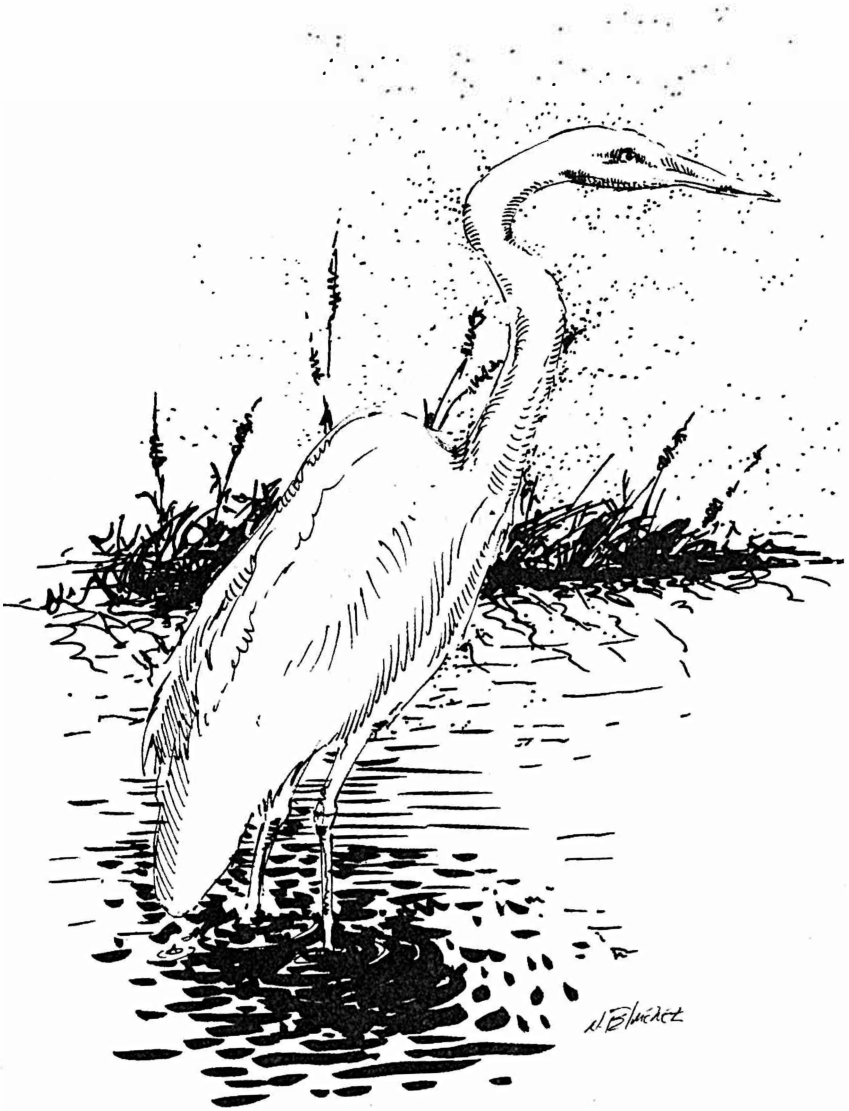
Hurricane Season

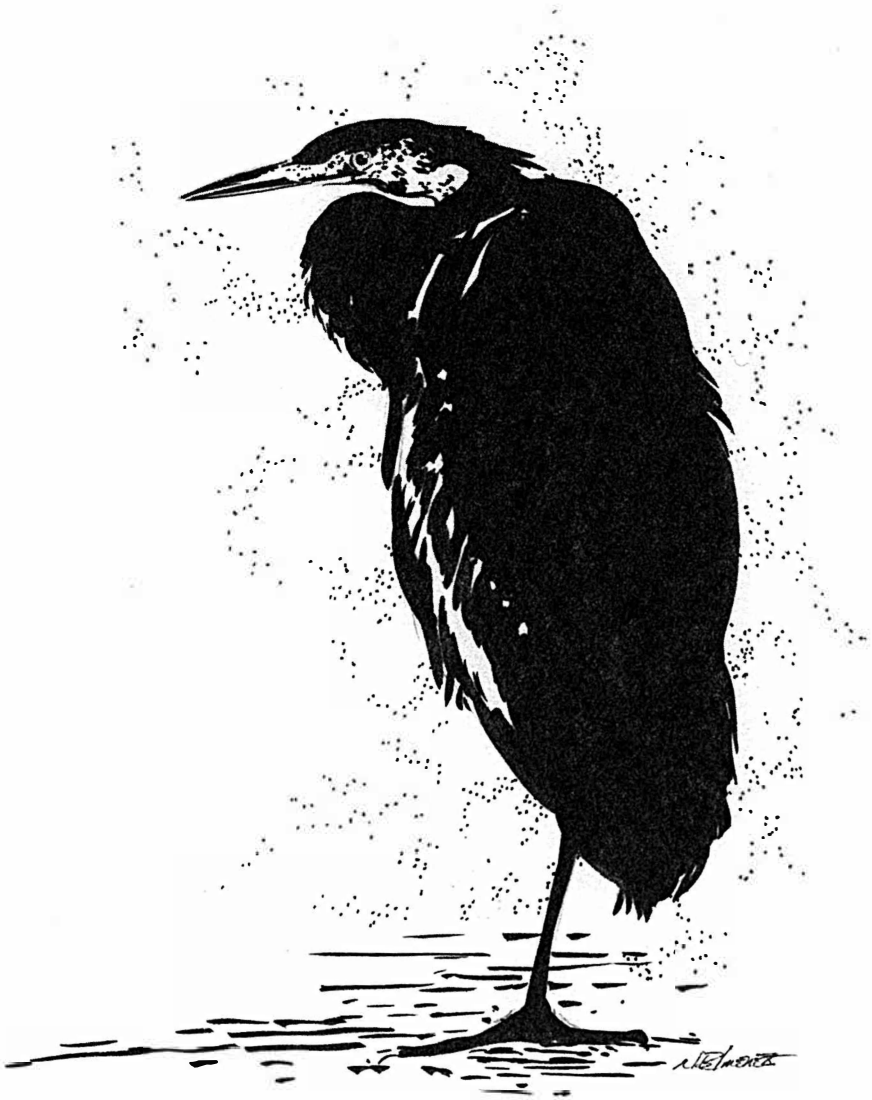
We're due a big blow one day soon,
waiting in our arc of the gulf for what
comes roiling forth from offshore Africa.

We have communal sins enough — overbuilt
barrier island, drug traffic, sprawling
colonias — to warrant a god's cleansing scour,

but the hour will come when wind
and current and heat meet in an unplanned
dance that spins to its own ancient howl.

– Charles Dameron





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